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**Meaning, Historicity, and the Conceptualisation of the
Social**

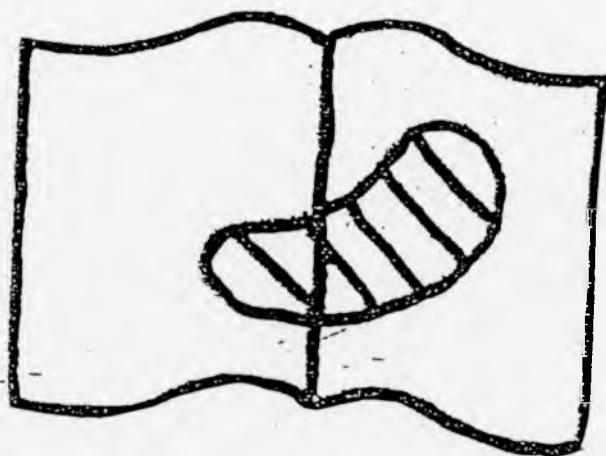
**A Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy**

University of Warwick, Department of Sociology

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Best Copy Available

SOME VERY, FAINT PRINT.



To my mother and to the memory of my father

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Declaration

This thesis is all my own work and contains original material, and has not been submitted for a degree at any other university.

Abstract

This thesis is an investigation of the interrelationship between the notions of 'meaning' and 'historicity', of the manner in which they inform or reflect conceptions of collective or 'social' being and of individuality, and of the ways in which these dimensions are primordially experienced by human beings. This investigation concerns primarily the phenomenological and hermeneutic traditions and especially Heidegger's formulation of the notion of historicity as correlative to the 'event' of truth understood in terms of an interplay between disclosure and concealment (αλήθεια) and Gadamer's understanding of 'meaning and historicity' as an indispensable couplet for both philosophical hermeneutics and the social sciences.

Nevertheless the present inquiry does not content itself with an exploration of the notions of 'meaning' and 'historicity' within the confines of the phenomenological-hermeneutic tradition, but rather attempts to attain a more adequate grasp of those concepts by a critical juxtaposition of Heidegger and Gadamer with accounts that have the 'social' as their point of departure. Thus, Heidegger's formulations on historicity are not only examined in relation to his 'immediate' legacy of German thought—especially Hegel and Nietzsche—but are also contrasted with conceptions of history pertaining to the Marxist tradition and especially Castoriadis' conception of the social-historical.

In effect, the contrast between 'historicity' and the workings of 'actual' history has arguably prevented a genuine dialogue between the Marxist and the phenomenological camps. Far from being concerned with a synthesis of those traditions or from being preoccupied with justifying either of them I have attempted to show that a combined reading of both is indispensable for the disclosure of the essential dimensions of historical experience. Castoriadis' emphasis on the 'magmatic' character of unconscious significations and his grounding of social-historical 'instituting' on the *unconscious*, together with Heidegger's attempt to link the primordial experience of history with *myth* have given me occasion to dissociate the very notion of 'meaning' from that of 'rationality'.

This should not be interpreted as a rejection of rationality or as an—at bottom—ethical invocation of a return to a pre-Critical philosophical position but rather as an attempt to indicate the *primordial* manner in which history is accessible in experience and which arguably precedes any thematic theorizing of the historical realm. I have finally attempted to show the antinomies inherent in any attempt to grasp 'rationally' the social-historical by a detailed exploration of Gadamer's ambivalent conception of 'tradition' and 'prejudice'. Gadamer's conception of the 'fusion of horizons' gave me occasion to reflect further on the manner in which history and truth are made correlatively accessible in thought, in experience, and in historical *praxis*.

Abbreviations

Although I have tried to keep abbreviations at a minimum the following books are referred to in an abbreviated form. For details on these publications please consult the bibliography. It should be also remarked that all the works that are not cited below are referred to throughout the thesis by their publication date.

Heidegger's works:

B&T for *Being and Time*

ID for *Identity and Difference*

IM for *An Introduction to Metaphysics*

PP for *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*

WP for *What is this, Philosophy?*

Gadamer's work:

T&M for *Truth and Method*

Introduction

The very title of the present work might at first seem quite vague, perhaps even puzzling, and thus in need of explanation. Indeed, '*meaning, historicity and the conceptualisation of the social*' might even seem an 'insulting' title to all those convinced either about the need to free oneself from the 'burden of history and tradition' or about the primacy of 'actual' history and the need for the conscious, planned transformation of socio-historical formations with the aim of attaining a more 'humane', enlightened, and autonomous state of societal-individual being¹, not to mention those content with the recurrent, quasi-apocalyptic yet banal invocation of the "end of history". To this state of affairs one could undoubtedly add the current preoccupation with the formulation of "theories of meaning", or the equally fervent belief in the "liquidation of meaning", what Baudrillard (1989: 9) for example has called the "perceptible evaporation of meaning" (and its replacement by *simulation*), which –if taken seriously– would suggest that the subject matter of this thesis is –at best– obsolete.

Nevertheless, the starting point of the present enquiry is somewhat different and does not rest content with simply taking sides in current debates or with uncritically accepting the presence, absence, or the commonly perceived

¹ This imagery of freeing oneself from the burden of historical time and tradition is often related to imageries of America. Wagner (1998a: 80-82) sees this attitude, characteristic of what he terms "pure modernity", epitomised in the phrase "*A beginning from nothingness and complete self-knowledge*". In the author's view this phrase may be seen as providing the basic ingredients from which "images of America could be produced". In contrasting the case of the French and the American revolutions, the author is furthermore able to conclude that the society founded after the American Revolution due to the lack of *history* and *tradition* seemed to be the first societal formation for which the conception of an autonomous creation of its institutions was viable.

mode of being of any of the 'concepts' mentioned above. Further, the need for the present investigation to address the notions of meaning and historicity and their peculiar connectedness with the manner in which the social is conceptualised –or *fails* to attain the status of a concept– first made itself apparent in light of the acknowledgement of the *elusive* and *inescapable* nature of the state of affairs that the present thesis attempts to grasp. I cannot think of anyone who has expressed the problematic relationship between "meaning", "history", and "being" in a sharper manner than Jan Patocka. Indeed, the thinker is convinced that the ambiguity with which the concept of "meaning" is vested is primarily the result of an "apparent obviousness" that it shares with "all basic concepts, which are so common that their nature" (Patocka, 1996: 53) resists the rules of definition so dear to traditional logic. More importantly Patocka shows the *inescapability* of those concepts, which he sees as often generating an *uncritical* disposition towards the so-called "inescapable conceptual tools", i.e. the acceptance of their "self-evidence". To recognize the *problematic* nature of *meaning* –and history– would then be to agree with Patocka about the need to be "no less open about the meaningful than for the meaningless" since it is arguably the "same beings" that "manifest themselves now as meaningful, now as meaningless" (Patocka, 1996: 57). I would not nevertheless like to prejudice the question of the *significance* of this problematic nature of "meaning" by following Patocka in his argument that "human life is not possible without either a naïve or a critically acquired confidence in an absolute meaning" (Patocka, 1996: 58). Despite the undeniable force of this argument, it might be preferable if we shifted our attention from the problem of the contrast between "absolute" and "relative" meaning and the centrality this

conveys to issues of "values" and "social action", so as to make available the very essence of the historical. Properly speaking history cannot "have" a meaning or "meanings", since it of all "beings" is rather *perceived* at times as *meaningful* and at times as *meaningless*, to use Patocka's words. Instead of interpreting this interplay between the "presence" and "absence" of meaning as an *attribute* of the historical "realm", would it not be preferable if we simply viewed the historical as the *locus* of meaning lest we treat both "meaning" and "history" as *objects* pertaining to the jurisdiction of specific sciences or alternatively as being graspable at the margins of interdisciplinary research? Indeed, both the notion of "meaning" and the "historical" as such are from the outset of this thesis regarded as *questions* rather than as definable "entities".

It should be also made clear that this thesis does not attempt to establish any straightforward –even less a *causal*– relationship between conceptions of the 'social' and understandings of 'history'. In fact, rather than making strong claims on the issue it was deemed preferable to *point* to conceptions of collective or 'social' being that overtly or secretly coexist with conceptions of history. Actually, it could be even argued that this coexistence is very rarely harmonious and that in reality very often within the boundaries of a conceptual framework one of these 'concepts' *limits* the other, although there is certainly no way –and perhaps no *reason*– to derive a systematic relationship between the two concepts. The idea that the very conception of the 'social' might have limiting effects for an open conception of the historical might seem strange, but it is actually grounded on the observation that the emergence of the notion of the 'social' and the early stages of 'social science' resulted in a neutralization of the possibilities inherent in the field of political action. Society

"as an object of the social sciences" being rather a post-revolutionary discovery as Wagner suggests, signified a precarious linkage between "free action and predictable outcome", which resulted from the tendency generated by the American and the French revolutions to study "what held human beings together" and how their lives could be organized in 'associations' or 'social movements' within 'polities' and 'nation-states' and "what regularities [of action] could be expected if people were permitted to do so...without imposed restrictions" (Wagner, 1998b: 244-245). Hannah Arendt has rightly detected in the "action of the social scientists" a crucial aspect of the victory of man qua *animal laborans*, which she saw as being complete due to the demolition of the "certainty of immortality" that befell western humanity ever since the advent of Cartesian doubt. This triumph of the *animal laborans*, is it not an obliteration of the "revelatory character" of action proper and a lack of the ability to "produce stories and thus become historical" (Arendt, 1958: 320- 325)? Arendt answers this question in the affirmative while also detecting in this 'modern' attitude a severing from the "source from which meaningfulness springs into and illuminates human existence". That this deprivation is in Arendt's view not only characteristic of social scientific thought but rather the main attribute of modern philosophy² is apparent in her polemics against the philosophers who "became either epistemologists, worrying about an over-all theory of science" or "became what Hegel wanted them to be, the organs of the *Zeltgeist*, the mouthpieces in which the general mood of time was expressed with conceptual clarity" (Arendt, 1958: 294). The Hegelian conception of history, and especially

² Wagner (2000) expresses a similar insight in arguing that the "discovery" of society in early sociological accounts should be seen as an even in political philosophy and that consequently sociology can be regarded as a 'transformed' and 'empirical' version of political philosophy.

the concept of *Geist* arguably present us with a riddle and despite Arendt's attack on Hegel one cannot but agree with Patocka on the indispensability of Hegel's insight concerning the impossibility of seeing politics as being established on the "conscious freedom" of one person alone –say of a 'ruler' or the pharaoh. Patocka certainly takes Arendt's distinction between labour, work, and production quite seriously and this why he sees in the organisation of work "whose goal is to sustain life and its order" only the "foundation of religion and power" (Patocka, 1996: 147-148). Conversely, he traces the ground of politics in the separation between work and production that freed –some- individuals for political life, making thus possible the beginning of history –in the strict sense- in the context of the Greek polis.

Revealing though these conceptions may be in disclosing aspects of the relationship between the orientations of human beings in the world, historical-political praxis and the postulation of a 'social' reality underlying human actions and aspirations, they still represent only a small particle in the 'ocean' of relevant ideas. Indeed they are mentioned here not as unshakable 'truths' but solely as points of departure for the present enquiry. Heidegger's reflections on the Greek polis being a considerable part of the first chapter of this thesis, even if in a slightly indirect a manner. Indeed Heidegger's reflections on the *Antigone* are of great interest, since they do not approach this masterpiece of the culture of the Athenian democracy from a modern 'democratic' perspective. Heidegger's refusal to address the problem of the clash between the "law of the family" and the "law of the state" in the Hegelian fashion, or even his unwillingness to comment on the gulf between human and divine law masterfully narrated by Sophocles can be seen as both a disadvantage and a

merit of his reading of the *Antigone*. Thus, although Heidegger successfully resists the tendency -inherent in many modern thinkers- to idealise the Greek experience of democracy he is at the same time liable for almost entirely bypassing the question of modern democracy. It has to be remarked though that the perspective from which Heidegger's interpretation of the *Antigone* is carried out in this chapter is not primarily political. If it were, Heidegger's scattered remarks about the inadequacy of parliamentary democracy, his open enmity to communism and his support to Nazism would have been sufficient grounds for abandoning any further inquiry into Heidegger's thought. Instead, the attempt was made in this first chapter firstly to situate Heidegger's thought with regard to earlier philosophical developments and secondly, to give a first account of his theorisation of historicity in relation to his wider project in his major work, *Being and Time*.

An explanatory note is indispensable here. Any attempt to derive a systematic exposition of the notion of *historicity* in Heidegger's thought has to decide whether the philosophy of the 'later Heidegger', is compatible with his philosophical elaborations prior to the "turn". Although this concern is not central to the purposes of this thesis -for it is not concerned with a systematic interpretation of the notion of historicity throughout Heidegger's oeuvre³- it has to be remarked that for a variety of reasons I opted for 'relative continuity'. This I regarded as essential mainly because the 'complete rupture' hypothesis very conveniently dissociates Heidegger's late philosophy from the thinker's political

³ Hans Ruin (1994) attempts a systematic 'tracing' of the theme of historicity throughout Heidegger's work with paradigmatic rigour. It seems to this reader that in a manner reminiscent of Gadamer, Ruin (1994: 16-17) legitimises the postulation of some 'continuity' in Heidegger's oeuvre by rightly linking the problem of historicity with the "happening of disclosedness" and by showing that Heidegger's "version of

'blunder' that Heidegger himself attributed to his understanding of historicity. Bold though this 'confession' might seem it had a very peculiar effect in the reception of Heidegger's thought, since it implied that the philosopher had grasped something very significant with his notion of historicity but had to abandon this line of enquiry because of the unfortunate event of his political involvement. Heidegger has of course also spoken of the impasse of his early thought and of the need to perform the famous 'turn' in thinking but this hardly changes the main impression on the issue. Strange though it might seem this self-interpretation of Heidegger was almost taken at face value in the present work. I say almost because it was plain to me that if Heidegger had uncovered an essential dimension of the historical being of humans and if indeed this dimension was inextricably linked with his recasting of the question of the "meaning of being" and with the concurrent questioning of the history of the west seen in terms of the history of metaphysics, then this question could not be dropped at will⁴. What would furthermore be more plausible, Heidegger's alleged 'confession' that his understanding of historicity was responsible for his political involvement, or the postulation that his political opinions might have interfered with his account of historicity? I refused to take any of those options very seriously. The first requires that we take one of the most influential philosophers of the twentieth century for a fool, the second that some 'purging' of Heidegger's understanding of historicity from its 'ideological' components would restore the concept in its immaculate status. Rather for me Heidegger's

Ursprungphilosophie" is ultimately dependent on the "affirmation of its historicity" and on the choice to "operate from within it" (Ruin, 1994: 25).

⁴ This dropping of the question of historicity is even philosophically unthinkable if Gadamer is right that Heidegger's questioning of western metaphysics was an attempt to "open a dimension in which, as with

'blunder' was all of these things together, but most importantly it pointed me to the ambiguity inherent in human praxis and gave me the idea of juxtaposing allegedly politically 'progressive' accounts of history with Heidegger's account of historicity.

Not only did this idea give birth to the *second* chapter of the thesis, but also it is responsible for a certain two-dimensionality that characterises this text as a whole. The reader won't miss this juxtaposition, which in the first chapter takes mainly the form of an evaluation of Adorno, Derrida and Castoriadis' critique of Heidegger's project taking place through the frequent insertion of footnotes. In addition to making the footnotes quite important for the appreciation of the present work, this primary and elementary form of a contrast between Heidegger and 'progressive thinkers' generated the need for a more explicit juxtaposition⁵ of the hermeneutic-phenomenological tradition and those approaches –broadly speaking of Marxist origin– that place the "social" at the centre of their reflections on history.

'historicism' historicity would no longer serve as a limiting hindrance to truth and the objectivity of knowledge" (Gadamer, 1994: 86).

⁵ I often use the word 'compass' to indicate my interest in the conceptual 'space' opened up by the juxtaposition between the two traditions. It has to be remarked though that this 'word' is not systematically elaborated and thus it should not be seen as a concept proper. Also, the way I use the term here should not be confounded with Foucault's more 'rigorous' use of the term *compasse*.

Thus, the second chapter of my thesis is a more 'pronounced' and thematic juxtaposition between Castoriadis' conception of the *social-historical* and Heidegger's understanding of authentic historicity in terms of fate and repetition. The question naturally arises why of all the possible candidates 'belonging' to, or having some sort of allegiance with the Marxist tradition Castoriadis was selected for this purpose. This selection might appear ever stranger in light of the fact that Marcuse has briefly been a student of Heidegger and that his early work was an attempt to bridge the philosophy of *Being and Time* with Marxism. In this respect Marcuse of all 'Marxist' thinkers would seem to be the 'evident' or even 'unavoidable' choice. In truth the choice of Castoriadis was partly dictated by the course of the inquiry and partly related to my earlier interest in Castoriadis' thought. In any case it is I believe indisputable that Castoriadis is the only thinker who saw the social and the historical as essentially one domain, as essentially 'social-historical'. More importantly Castoriadis rightly detected in Marxist philosophy of history a tendency to neutralise the dynamic and unexpected aspects of historical existence, by prejudicing the very outcome of historical change. Castoriadis' critique of Marxism is quite important for the additional reason that it traces the origins of this neutralisation in the very conceptualisation of the *social* by allegedly 'orthodox' Marxist accounts. In this sense, his understanding of the social-historical institution and his radical theorisation of the unconscious as the *locus* of the emergence of the radically new in history, qualified him as indispensable for the purposes of my thesis. Not only Castoriadis' positions provide a stark contrast with Heidegger's insistence on the repetitive character of historical enactment, but also those antithetical and conflicting accounts

seem to be grounded on the perceived urgency for a thought and praxis that surpasses the horizon of "western metaphysics" (Heidegger) or of "inherited philosophy" (Castoriadis). In this chapter I aspired to show how both these accounts operate from the interpretative 'space' opened up by the postulation of a fundamental antithesis, namely an antithesis between authenticity and inauthenticity in the case of Heidegger and that of a breach between autonomy and heteronomy in the philosophy of Castoriadis. Furthermore, Castoriadis' grounding of history on the magma-like significations of the unconscious provided me with an invaluable link between historical praxis and meaning. Importantly, it also points beyond the usual identifications of the dimension of meaning with either rationality or language to the nether regions of the unconscious. In this sense it has to be remarked in passing that Habermas' 'excursus' on Castoriadis fundamentally misunderstands the most important dimension of Castoriadis' thought, namely that if the 'imaginary dimension' is indeed magmatic in nature, then it cannot be evaluated either from the perspective of normativity or from the dimension of speech as Habermas' critique seems to suggest⁶. The reader should be also warned off from interpreting my own critical remarks on Castoriadis as indicating a preference towards the Heideggerian narrative that follows the presentation and critical evaluation of Castoriadis.

Rather it is not only Castoriadis but also the tradition of western or humanist Marxism that is evoked once more in the third chapter, which as the previous chapters is subdivided into two parts. The first part is a confrontation

⁶ See for instance Habermas' thesis according to which "Castoriadis lacks a solution, because his concept of society in terms of fundamental ontology leaves no room for an intersubjective praxis for which

of Gadamer's formulation of the Heideggerian conceptions on meaning and historicity and his attempt to establish a mode of cognition appropriate for philosophy and the *Geisteswissenschaften*. Given that Gadamer explicitly strives to overcome the confines posed by current epistemological accounts, it was deemed necessary to begin our inquiry into Gadamer's thought by contrasting his 'ontology' with the fundamental assumptions of epistemological schools so as to gain a clear insight of the manner in which epistemology has coloured –but arguably not distorted– his own philosophical project. The attempt was also made to situate Gadamer's attitude with regard to the long tradition in German thought, which strived to resist the domination of technical-scientific reasoning. This has presented me with the opportunity to trace points of convergence not only between Gadamer and his 'immediate heritage' of German idealism, the Romantics, and the various guises of phenomenology, especially Husserl and Heidegger, but also with the intellectual tradition of 'western Marxism'. The linkage with German Idealism and the Romantics is primarily discussed through an evaluation of Gadamer's appropriation of the notion of *Bildung*, while his overall attempt to free philosophical reflection from technical reason is discussed in conjunction with the reflections of Weber, Adorno, and Horkheimer on instrumentality, Husserl's critique of the sciences in the *Crisis* and Heidegger's reflections on technology. The second part of this chapter is a more explicit theorisation of the place occupied by tradition and the systematic relationship between 'tradition' and Gadamer's equally heretical conception of the notion of prejudice. This entails that the whole conception of the Enlightenment regarding the inner logic

socialized individuals are *accountable*", or the remark that "Castoriadis permits no difference between

binding together truth and freedom is once again closely examined and cast into doubt. Once more, this allowed me to critically engage with the Marxist tradition, especially through an appreciation of the unfavourable status attributed concurrently to myth and rationality by Adorno and Horkheimer. This led me to consider more closely the problem of 'prejudice' seen as 'ideological distortion' – a fact that according to as diverse critics of Gadamerian hermeneutics as Habermas and Ricoeur remains allegedly unacknowledged or inadequately addressed in Gadamer's philosophy- and thus to a consideration of the Marxist conception of 'class-consciousness' and its postulated effects for the Marxist conception of history. I conduct this relatively brief- but crucial for the purposes of the present thesis- discussion primarily by an evaluation of Lukács' elaborations on the issue as developed in his *History and Class Consciousness*. Gadamer's attempt to elaborate a 'historical hermeneutics' by means of the abandonment of the widely accepted distinction between 'tradition' and 'historical research', or between 'history and knowledge' pointed me to the need to explore more closely his notion of the 'fusion of horizons', to which the first part of the fourth chapter is dedicated.

Like most of the key-formulations in the history of thought the concept of the 'fusion' is vested with a familiarity that arguably leaves it open to misinterpretations making at the same time its most important dimensions almost inaccessible. Especially in recent epistemological accounts the concept of the 'fusion' is given such an extraordinary treatment that it is almost depicted in terms of a mechanism. Not only does this depiction entail an obliteration of the theoretical positions that Gadamer appropriated in order to

meaning and validity" (Habermas, 1987: 330-331).

devise this concept, but it more importantly cancels the original conception of the 'fusion' in terms of an 'event', i.e. in terms of 'historical praxis'. In order to better grasp the mode of being of the 'fusion' the discussion in the first part of the chapter is conducted by exploring the close links between the concept of the 'fusion' and Heidegger's 'hermeneutics of facticity'. Furthermore, a specific yet substantial⁷ instance of the 'fusion', viz. the event of 'truth' made accessible in the very experiencing of the work of art is made thematic and points of convergence between Gadamer, Walter Benjamin and Heidegger on the issue are explored. The final part of the thesis is at first glance concerned with the problems of continuity and rupture but in essence, it is a rethinking of the relationship between 'past', 'present' and 'future', of the 'fleeting' and the 'enduring' as they converge in our experiencing of historical time. The reader might be puzzled by the fact that a section on historical time begins by a discussion of the Gadamer-Derrida debate –or should I say the failure to have a proper debate- on the nature of language. Nevertheless since Gadamer's understanding of the "fusion of horizons" and his 'dialogical model' were both under critical scrutiny on the assumption that they disclose Gadamer's alleged suppression of 'difference', of 'discord', and ultimately of the 'Other' the only viable option was for me to start with this juxtaposition.

The introduction of two essays written by Gadamer that explicitly tackle the problem of continuity and rupture as well as the peculiar relationship between what we could term the significance of the historical 'event' and that of the 'existential moment' drastically changes the scenery. Finally, it provides me with the opportunity to conclude the chapter with a comparison between the

⁷ Substantial since the experience of art is of paramount importance for the development of Gadamer's

peculiar 'retaining' of the 'origin' in Heidegger's thinking of history in close relation to the event of truth in his *Parmenidis* and a similar phenomenon characteristic of Gadamer's formulation of the 'fusion'.

reflections on a conception of truth that surmounts the conceptual confines of science.

Chapter One

Heidegger on

The question of Being, Dasein, and Historicity

Introductory Remarks

The aim of this chapter is to explore the relationship between Heidegger's attempts to devise a radical or fundamental ontology and his endeavour to ground the notion of history on authentic temporality and historicity, while substituting his conception of the Dasein for the notion of individuality. The first part of the chapter is an attempt to situate Heidegger's allegedly novel conception of the meaning of Being in the wider context of the philosophical tradition and to critically assess the objection that his fundamental ontology is antithetical to a critical and autonomous theorisation of the social-historical domain. The second part of this chapter is a more explicit theorisation of the way in which authenticity is related to historical praxis both on the 'individual' and the collective levels.

1.1 Recasting the ontological question: The Hermeneutic Project of Heidegger's Fundamental Ontology

It is well known that Heidegger's main intention in *Being & Time*⁸ is to cast anew -or perhaps according to the philosopher's own conviction to cast properly for the first time⁹ in the history of philosophy- the question of Being¹⁰, or more accurately the question concerning the " meaning of Being ". This latter and more specific formulation is corrective of the first in that it directly points to the fact that Being has always already been interpreted, although the interpretation itself has been obliterated (B&T: 21). Or rather, it is in the very nature of this interpretation¹¹ to continually conceal the disclosure of Being, making a reformulation of " the fundamental question " necessary (B&T: 24-25). Meaning and question can be thus seen as complementing one another, if meaning is indeed thought outside the framework of metaphysics and its emphasis on the concept of essence. Meaning is in this interpretation an act of

⁸ See Heidegger 1962, hereafter referred to as B&T.

⁹ Thus, Heidegger's thought had a significant and almost immediate impact on young philosophy students in Germany; a success partly based on what was perceived as the radically innovative character of his philosophising. Gadamer gives an account of the tremendous influence Heidegger's thought had on the generation of students returning from World War I, and who "shattered by the collapse of an epoch wanted to begin completely anew" that places great emphasis on the fact that "Heidegger's thought seemed to defy any comparison with what philosophy had previously meant" (Gadamer, 1967/1976: 229).

¹⁰ For a brief but elucidating account concerning the evolution of Heidegger's thought and his early attempts at a formulation of the question concerning the meaning of " being ", especially with regard to his indebtedness to Franz Brentano's *Von der mannigfachen Bedeutung des Seienden nach Aristoteles* (Freiburg-im-Breisgau: Herder, 1862), and to Husserl's *Logical investigations*, see Farrell Krell, 1993: 4-9; Biemel 1993: 19 ff. Furthermore, it has been suggested that the aforementioned question can be articulated in three differentiated although interconnected dimensions, which result in the following modifications of the question itself: 1. "The analytic question: What is the meaning... of the expression 'Being' (Sein)?" 2. "The metaphysical question: What is Being? Or, What is the ground of Being?" and 3. "The theological question: Why is there Being (rather than nothing at all)?" (Solomon, 1972: 191)

¹¹ The nature of this interpretation is perhaps too difficult to accommodate in the beginning of our excursion in Heidegger's thought. Nevertheless, it has to be said from the outset that in Heidegger's radicalisation of the hermeneutic claim, interpretation is the essential condition for both his concept of historicity and for that situation which he describes as " the disclosedness of Being ". Indeed, one has to contend with the assertion that this "ontological turn " that classical hermeneutics underwent in Heidegger's thought, means that it should be no longer " seen as just a method for

questioning, and more specifically "a question that does not await a specific answer, but instead points in a certain direction for inquiry". Moreover, this allegedly non-static, non-metaphysical understanding of meaning is also apparent behind Heidegger's introduction of an "orthographical archaism in spelling the term 'Sein' as 'Seyn' in order to underscore its character as a verb" (Gadamer, 1985/1989b: 111; see also Heidegger, 1998c: 75). Heidegger is in fact in this early attempt already aware of the problem that was destined to occupy his later writings, namely that "even when we ask, What *is* Being, we keep within an understanding of the *is*, though we are unable to fix conceptually what that *is* signifies." ¹²(B&T: 25). Thus, although this factual, "average" understanding of Being does not even allow for a clear grasping of the horizon in terms of which the meaning of Being is fixed, it nevertheless necessitates the formulation of the concept¹³ of Being. Additionally it allows for

understanding, but also as an ontological theory of the being of understanding and of its conditions of possibility." (Ruin 1994: 73)

¹² cf. The following passage: "The difficulty to which thoughtful utterance is subject has appeared often enough...The little word *is*, which speaks everywhere in our language, and tells of Being even where it does not appear expressly, contains the whole destiny of Being -from the εστιν γαρ of Parmenides to the *is* of Hegel's speculative sentence, and to the dissolution of the *is* in the positing of the Will to Power with Nietzsche." (Heidegger 1969: 73 hereafter referred to as ID). It is in this respect that Being and Time has been characterised as monumental, in that it made philosophy sensitive to the "verbality" in the word "being", to what constitutes an *event* in it, contrary to the habitual usage which refers to being "as if it were substantive, even though it is a verb par excellence." (Levinas 1985: 38). Levinas refers in this passage to the *event of appropriation*, to this *singulare tantum*, which although not "a happening" or an "occurrence" in the traditional understanding of the terms, is pertinent to the belonging together of Dasein and Being. It is this *event* that according to Heidegger constitutes the possibility of Dasein overcoming "the mere dominance of the [technological] frame [in order to] turn it into a more original appropriation" (ID: 36-37).

¹³ Heidegger does not deny that Being has been the presupposition of all ontology up to his days. This would be absurd, since without this presupposition "there could have been no ontological knowledge before". Nevertheless, he claims that philosophy failed to elevate this understanding to the status of the *concept* (B&T: 27). Caputo, in his interpretation of *Being and Time*, rightly underlines the close linkage between philosophy's alleged failure to conceptualise Being and its subsequent failure in the conceptualisation of Dasein: "We do not know (*wissen*) what Dasein and *a fortiori* Being itself mean; we lack a conceptual fix (*begrifflich fixieren*) on them. But we always and already move about within an *understanding* of them...and the task of hermeneutic phenomenology is to raise this pre-understanding to the level of an ontological concept" (Caputo, 1987: 67).

an inquiry into the infiltration of this average understanding of Being with traditional theories and opinions concerning this issue (loc. cit).

What is then asked about in the question of Being? How must we think this *determinant* of the entities¹⁴, which Heidegger warns us "is not itself an entity"? Partly, the answer lies in this decisive half-hermeneutic half-phenomenological step which, while refusing Being's status as an entity, attempts to question the Being of the entities themselves, in such a way as to allow entities to "become accessible as they are in themselves." (B&T: 26, emphasis added). Thus, from the outset the Heideggerian narrative of Being is not destined to be διηγησις μυθου τινος¹⁵, a "mythical" tracing back of the entities to their origin¹⁶. Instead, Heidegger introduces three distinguished though

¹⁴ Heidegger formulates this in the following manner: "In the question we are to work out, *what is asked about* is Being- that which determines entities, that on the basis of which entities are already understood, however we may discuss them in detail. The Being of entities *is not itself an entity*." (B&T: 25-26).

¹⁵ An allusion to Plato's *Sophist*, and specifically in the dialogue between Theaetetus and the visiting philosopher from Elea: "They each [i.e. philosophers, or philosophical schools] appear to me to tell us a myth, as if we were children. One tells us there are three beings...another one says that there are two beings...our Eleatic tribe...tells us their myth on the assumption that what they call *all things* are just one." (Sophist, 242c-d: 263). Gadamer remarks that in other parts of the *Sophist*, the stranger from Elea expounds the "two basic modes of manifestation of beings as motion and rest", which seem to exhaust "completely the possibilities of the manifestation of Being". Nevertheless in Gadamer's reading of this dialogue the stranger's intention is not to "understand Being as the universal genus which differentiates itself into these two aspects of Being". Plato is then seen as rather intending to show that in speaking about being "a differentiation is implicit which does not distinguish different realism(s) of Being but rather suggests an inner structuredness of Being itself" and which furthermore shows that the two aspects in question are not mutually exclusive but "mutually determining". The true philosopher -in contrast with the sophist- is thus only able to think "the togetherness of Being (the affirmation) and Non-being (the negation) which constitutes the nature of beings", while "the later Heidegger" is said to take up the question at "this point", i.e. to the realisation that the determinate mode in which *ride* are made manifest as "unchangeable determinateness" determines the very meaning of *unconcealment* and consequently amounts to the abandonment of the question concerning the meaning of Being (Gadamer, 1994: 83-84).

¹⁶ The way in which Heidegger understands *myth* is, in this context, quite obscure, although it could arguably be interpreted as synonymous to metaphysical thought. It is clear though, that in his view, "mythical", or "metaphysical" accounts attribute the existence of entities to its origination by a primal source, which is in turn conceived in the *mode of an entity*. Consequently, the *ontological difference*, viz. the difference between Being and beings is obliterated. In this context it might be helpful to pay heed to the specific importance that, even in later writings, Heidegger attributes to the *oblivion* of the aforementioned difference. Thus, oblivion and difference form a couplet, the latter referring to "what is unthought", the former is "what gives us thought", and although oblivion is understood by Heidegger as "a veiling of the difference as such, thought in terms of *Λήθη* (concealment)", it nevertheless "does not happen to the difference only afterward, in consequence of the forgetfulness of Being". Rather, the

interconnected levels of inquiry -the fundamental/ontological¹⁷, the ontological in the familiar sense of the term, and the ontical- whereupon the priority of the question of Being is grounded (B&T: 31). In Heidegger's project of fundamental-ontology we encounter therefore a radicalisation of traditional philosophical claims over the legitimisation of scientific discourses and practices, as thinkers like Kant and Hegel pronounced them.¹⁸ A philosophical project that inquires into the possibility of (natural) science as such (Kant) or that aims at subordinating the sciences to the philosophical "Science of the Idea" (Hegel), is here pronounced to be inadequate¹⁹ and endowed with a certain kind of *naïveté*. The ontological priority of the question of Being is thus summarised:

"oblivion *belongs* to the difference because the difference *belongs* to oblivion"(II: 50-51-emphasis added). Nevertheless, this attempt to surmount the problems allegedly inherent in "mythical" accounts does not entail the abolition of the notion of the origin in Heidegger's thought, as we will attempt to show in the development of our presentation.

¹⁷ Although Heidegger sketches this distinction in the context discussed above, the term *fundamental ontology* is introduced for the first time in page 34, para.4.

¹⁸ The affinities, as well as the differences of the project of fundamental ontology with Husserl's phenomenology, both with regard to the critique of scientific reason and to the perceived urgency for a philosophy of the origins should also be accounted for in this context. Obviously, Heidegger's own position towards Husserl was less explicitly formulated and this is the reason why I find it preferable to defer this discussion until later. I would nevertheless like to draw the reader's attention to a passage supporting the interpretation offered above concerning the radicalisation of "traditional" philosophical claims, while exemplifying a certain reproach on Heidegger's part even against Husserl's version of phenomenology: "For we should have to be certain beforehand that phenomenological inquiry today has reached the centre of philosophy's problems and has defined its own nature by way of their possibilities. As we shall see, however, *this is not the case*- and so little is it the case that one of the main purposes of this course is to show that, conceived in its basic tendency, phenomenological research can represent nothing less than the more explicit and more radical understanding of *the idea of a scientific philosophy* which philosophers from ancient times to Hegel sought to realize time and again in a variety of internally coherent endeavours" (B&T: 3-emphasis added).

¹⁹ It nevertheless seems to me quite clear that Heidegger's alleged "contempt", or his "negative attitude" towards the empirical sciences is directly connected with a certain interpretation on Heidegger's part of certain sections of Hegel's writings. This can be seen if we consider e.g. the following passage from Hegel's *Science of Logic*: "The consideration of this stage belongs to the *doctrine of spirit* proper, which would embrace what is the subject matter of ordinary *empirical psychology*, but which, to be the science of spirit, must not go empirically to work, but be scientifically conceived. Spirit is at this stage *finite* spirit, in so far as the *content* of its determinateness is an immediate, given content; the science of finite spirit has to display the process in which it liberates itself from this its determinateness and goes on to grasp the truth of itself, which is infinite spirit" (Hegel, 1969: 782). It has to be remarked that in Hegel's terminology *science* denotes his own *speculative philosophy*, which in Hegel's eyes should be able to provide "the various sciences" with the context whereby they would strive to attain their aims. Philosophy could be thus said to be for Hegel the *unconditioned* in contradistinction with the empirical sciences, which are conceived

Basically all ontology, no matter how rich and firmly compacted as a system of categories it has at its disposal, remains blind and perverted from its ownmost aim, if it has not first adequately clarified the meaning of Being, and conceived this clarification as its fundamental task. (Loc. cit).

"Blind to its ownmost aim": Has the urgency of the Heideggerian project reached its apex with this phrase, a real 'insult' to the philosophical legacy? And if so, has Heidegger made clear the way in which his project is to be carried out?

Presumably, a further justification is required both with regard to that level which he earlier relegated to the lowest status (for the tripartite division of the levels of inquiry is *in a sense* hierarchical²⁰), and with regard to the entity "in which the meaning of Being is to be discerned" (B&T: 26).

As regards the second leg of the aforementioned tasks, Dasein is understood as this entity which is ontically distinguished from other entities in

as dependent on "some specific context of opinions, theories, attitudes, and values" (Solomon, 1983: 179; see also Hegel, 1977: 23 ff, where the philosopher attacks the disciplines of history and mathematics).

²⁰ That this hierarchy is not incontestable is rather too obvious. Adorno offers an interesting and provocative reversal of this, using the analogy of the edifice. If the philosopher is said by Heidegger (always according to Adorno's polemical interpretation) to be the "architect who presents and develops the blueprint of the house, [then] the sociologist is like the cat burglar who climbs the walls from outside and takes out what he can reach". But this acceptance of the analogy on Adorno's part signifies only his willingness to "interpret positively the function...[Heidegger] gave sociology for philosophy." (Adorno, 1977: 130). Of course, "philosophy" in this context stands primarily -if not exclusively- for Heidegger's fundamental ontology, which given its popularity at the time -a popularity that Adorno all too readily acknowledges- represents an influential and therefore dangerous example of a philosophical attitude that "only veils reality and eternalises its present condition". Moreover, the question of being itself is said to exemplify this attitude since it assumes that "being itself is appropriate to thought and available to it...[whereas]...The idea of being has become...an empty form principle whose archaic dignity helps to cover any content whatsoever" (Ibid., : 120). In this respect, and in defence of Heidegger's definition of fundamental-ontology one could cite one of his most important and subtle critics who contended that "[fundamental] ontology would be distinguished from all the disciplines which explore *that* which is...while forgetting that in speaking of these beings they have already understood the meaning of the word being.

that its Being is always "an issue for it"; its distinctive ontical characteristic is its being ontological²¹ (B&T: 32). The priority of Dasein²² is furthermore established on the grounds of its being the only entity having the "determinate character of existence", while it is considered as the only entity that could provide "the *ontico-ontological* condition for the possibility of any ontology." (B&T: 34). Now, although fundamental ontology must be sought in the *existential analytic of Dasein*, the roots of the latter are *ontical-existential* and by a way of *detour* Heidegger announces the *ontical priority* of the question of Being²³(loc. cit).

Far from removing all ambiguity, the ontico-ontological priority of Dasein points to the very difficulty of Dasein's attempt to make manifest to itself its "own specific state of Being"²⁴. In other words the multiplicity of interpretations

without, however, having made it explicit. *These disciplines do not worry about such an implication.*" (Levinas, 1985: 38-39).

²¹ Dasein's being ontological is not in this context tantamount to the development of an ontological inquiry "explicitly devoted to the meaning of entities", but rather as "being in such a way as having an understanding of Being". This is the reason why Heidegger also defines Dasein in this context as *pre-ontological*.

²² Although the question has yet to remain open, whether the aforementioned priority is tantamount to a reduction of "material ontology" to the "realm of subjectivity, within the depths of which it searches for what it was not able to locate in the open fullness of reality", as Adorno (1977:123) argued.

²³ More emphatically put, Dasein has in a phenomenological manner "revealed itself as that entity which must first be worked out in an ontologically adequate manner..." and since we are going to occupy ourselves with the question of being, Dasein is proved to be the this entity which "in its Being [already comports itself] towards what we are asking about when we ask this question." This entails that the question of Being consists precisely in the *radicalisation* "of an essential tendency-of-Being which belongs to Dasein itself- the *pre-ontological* understanding of Being." (B&T: 35, emphasis added). Additionally, and by way of anticipation, it has to be noticed that the prefix (*pre*) is not used in an accidental manner; it rather already "points to Dasein's temporality." (Biemel 1993: 59).

²⁴ The acknowledgment of this difficulty is of course all but new in the history of philosophy. Socrates in his discussion with *Phaedrus* (229e- 230) announces in quite an urgent manner both the opacity of human existence and the subsequent need for philosophy to begin with a thorough examination of the human being: "ἐμοὶ δὲ πρὸς αὐτὰ οὐδαμῶς ἐστὶ σχολή τό δέ αἰτίον, ὦ φίλε, τοῦτου τόδε οὐ δύναμαι πω κατὰ τὸ Δελφικὸν γράμμα γινῶναι ἐμαυτὸν γέλειον δὴ μοι φαίνεται τοῦτο εἰ ἀγνοοῦντα τὰ ἀλλότρια σκοπεῖν" (Πλάτων, 2000: 76), which in Nehamas and Woodruff's translation reads: "But I have no time for such things; and the reason, my friend, is this. I am still unable, as the Delphic inscription orders, to know myself; and it really seems to me ridiculous to look into other things before I have understood that" (Plato, 1997: 510). I think it would be preferable if the -otherwise good- translation read "being still ignorant of" instead of "before I have understood", since apart from being a more literal translation of the ἀγνοοῦντα, it also points directly to the celebrated "Socratic ignorance". It has to be remarked though, that the affinity

always already available at the ontico-existential level interrupts the attainment of a justified interpretation of (Dasein's) Being and the resort to an existential primordiality that the latter requires (B&T: 37).

Thus, the existential analytic of Dasein has to be provisional in that it should content itself in simply making manifest the "Being of this entity [i.e. Dasein]" as the very possibility of the attainment of an horizon in terms of which "the most primordial way of interpreting Being" would be made possible. The philosophical task being thus construed, Heidegger has to take recourse to Dasein's everydayness, that being the essential and persistent structures possessed by factual Dasein, wherein Dasein could be shown as it "is" proximally and for the most part (ibid: 38-39).

Allegedly, this step justifies Heidegger's choice to point to "temporality as the meaning of Being of that entity" which he has previously named Dasein²⁵. Furthermore, once the aforementioned characteristic of temporality has been demonstrated Heidegger would be able to interpret Dasein's structure as modes of temporality, which is commonly held to be the incomplete task Heidegger set for himself in *Being and Time* ²⁶ (B&T: 39).

between the priority of *self-examination* advocated by Socrates in the aforementioned Platonic dialogue- and indeed in many other occasions- should not be overemphasised, although one could argue that with the concept of being-towards-death Heidegger moves more explicitly into this more "personal" type of investigation. It also seems to this reader that despite the similarities with Husserl's attempt to radicalise the Cartesian quest for certainty, Heidegger - or what seems to be the most fruitful interpretation of his thought- would like to break with the lack of clarity regarding "the meaning of the Being of the sum" in Descartes' most celebrated dictum, "*cogito ergo sum*" (see B&T: 46).

²⁵ Reflecting on his usage of the term Dasein several years after the publication of B&T and obviously irritated by its reception by academic circles, Heidegger explicitly rejects the idea of Dasein being a substitution for the term consciousness, "as this were simply a matter of using different words!". Rather, he insists, Dasein "names that which is first of all to be experienced, and subsequently thought accordingly, as a place- namely as *the locality of the truth of Being*." (Heidegger, [1949] 1998: 283).

²⁶ Neither the second part of the book, nor the third division of the first part entitled "time and Being" were ever published, although the section on Kant's concept of schematism from the second part was published independently as a book entitled "*Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*" (Biemel, 1993: 38). In this sense, Heidegger's project is said to have failed or at best to have been incomplete. The former assertion is closely linked with a suspicion with regard to the kind of question asked by Heidegger in *Being*

At this point, a discussion concerning the concept of time that Heidegger attempts to establish in contradistinction to the 'traditional' one (which quite interestingly comprises the whole history of thought from Aristotle to Bergson) has to be first formulated by means of our paying attention to Heidegger's attempt to think of time as constituting the horizon whereby any understanding of being is obtained, while the very conception of time has to be generated by Dasein's temporality. The centrality attributed to time can serve as the vehicle for the destruction of traditional ontology, in illuminating time's importance both with regard to the constitution of entities as temporal or supra-temporal and by indicating the linkage between an conception of time and the traditional dichotomy between Being and non-Being. What is more, it is Being itself, and not just entities in time, that becomes allegedly accessible (visible) in its temporal character, which should not be again understood in the traditional, privative fashion of something a-temporal being juxtaposed to temporal entities (B&T: 39-40). What is then, the specific importance of the temporalisation of the "human Being" that the signification "Dasein" attempts to bring to the fore, and in what specific ways does it illuminate Being as such? Furthermore, what kind of experience of truth does this unconcealment attest to? Whilst attempting to make headway towards this direction we should pay heed to

and Time pointing at the same time to his inability to escape the "enhanced circle of the philosophy of the subject" (Habermas 1985:152). The latter assertion, although recognising Heidegger's inability to overcome metaphysics understands itself as somehow remaining "within Heidegger's thought", while maintaining that in order to attain the destruction of metaphysics Heidegger had literally to "change horizons" so that along with the concept of time he had to rid his philosophical framework of all the themes dependent upon it. As a result, Dasein, finitude, historicity "will no longer constitute the transcendental horizon of the question of Being, but in transition will be reconstituted on the basis of the theme of the epochality of Being." (Derrida 1982:64). This seems to me to be an allusion to Heidegger's *Identity and Difference* where Heidegger points to the "historic, always epochal character" of the *clearing* of Being (ID: 67). However, it is not clear to me how the *question of Being* could be asked from within the alternative horizon that Derrida promulgates, and how distinctive an idea of epochality could be from that of historicity.

Heidegger's insistence, that being the highest in rank, the question of Being conditions not only philosophy²⁷ and language²⁸, but also human existence as such.

Accordingly, the entire range of possibilities²⁹ of the always historical being-there that Da-sein always is, are said to be grounded on the "power" generated from within an understanding of Being, even if the latter is an "indefinite" one (IM: 83). With this move Heidegger wishes to introduce his readers to a conception of knowledge, truth and experience that goes well beyond the confines of traditional logic. If it is possible that Being be understood-and we may wish to add also experienced- in certain ways, then irrespectively of the indeterminacy characteristic of this state of affairs, Being must have a meaning, it must open itself up to human understanding (IM: 84). What is more, it is exactly this disclosure of Being that is constitutive of the human elements in human beings; it is their specific historical being-there (loc. Cit.)

This contention points towards an understanding of the relationship between Being and the Dasein, which is deeper and more originary than it is commonly thought. In this context, Heidegger's composure to penetrate beyond the horizon opened up by the dichotomous subject-object relation³⁰, should be seen

²⁷ Philosophy, understood in this context as the discipline lacking an object, signifies for Heidegger the process, which "must at all times *achieve* being (in its appropriate manifestness) anew" (IM: 85, emphasis added).

²⁸ It is indicative in this respect that in the absence of the human ability to roughly distinguish between the "being" and the "not-being" of the essent (a state of affairs rendered "the indeterminate understanding of Being" in Heidegger's terminology), language and consequently the constitution of "the speaker" would be both ontologically impossible (IM: 78 and 82).

²⁹ That is the authentic affirmation of one's historical being-there, and/or an indifferent -and for this very reason inauthentic- attitude towards it, are both equally grounded on specific ways of understanding Being in a preliminary manner (see IM: 83).

³⁰ Castoriadis speaks of what he calls the "inherited philosophy" in terms very similar to Heidegger's treatment of "western metaphysics", although he identifies the obliterated element in the history of philosophy not in "the Being of beings" but in the "social historical", that being "the proper domain and mode of being and...the de jure and de facto ground and medium of any thought". This move is of crucial

as an attempt to liberate thinking from the tenets of common sense realism, and its Subjectivist counterpart. We are thus introduced to a "mysterious" mutual relationship between Being and Dasein, where the latter's existence is grounded on the disclosedness³¹ of the former, although this does not entail that Being becomes dependent on Dasein. In a certain sense, Dasein is shown to be "the measure of all things", in that Being's disclosure becomes incomprehensible and indeed unthinkable without the active involvement on the part of human beings. The active nature of this involvement should not be misinterpreted as entailing any kind of crude decisionism, since although Dasein can, and indeed should, strive to penetrate Being by questioning it, it is Being that holds sway over humans, "apprehension is the happening that has man" (IM: 141). Dasein's essence becomes then only thinkable by means of this relationship, as Heidegger's idiosyncratic³²-but not unprecedented-

importance since it denies that Heidegger's thought succeeded in overcoming the subject-object dichotomy and thereby places him *within* the "inherited" philosophical tradition, which has posited "a polarized couple: the subject or ego on the one hand (psyche, animus, transcendental consciousness, ego, *Dasein* as the *je eigenes, je meins*): the object or world on the other hand (cosmos, creation, nature, transcendence, *Welt* and/or Being)" (Castoriadis, 1997: 376-377).

³¹ Heidegger distinguishes between the "uncoveredness" of a being and the "disclosedness" of *its being*, while he attributes a certain primacy to the latter, as the necessary precondition of the former (PP: 72).

³² Heidegger is well aware of the oddness of his interpretation- also coupled by several non-traditional but equally ingenious translations from the Greek- which brings the thoughts of the two great Presocratics closer than one could normally dare suggest, in his arguing that "Heraclitus to whom is ascribed the doctrine of becoming as diametrically opposed to Parmenidis' doctrine of being, *says the same* as Parmenidis." (IM: 97- emphasis added). A further explication of the philosophical grounds of this interpretation can be found in the *Heraclitus Seminar*, where Heidegger underlines the difference between a pre-conceptual understanding of γένεσις (the act of begetting) in Heraclitus and the modern concept of becoming, which he summarizes as follows: "When Heraclitus thinks of γένεσις, in γινόμενον he does not mean *becoming* in the modern sense, he does not mean a process (Heidegger & Fink 1993: 8).

May's (1996: 56, n.153) suggestion that Heidegger does not receive the impetus for his "new poetic thinking" neither from the pre-Socratics, nor "from western (theo)-mystical thinking, nor from Nietzsche's poetic thinking" may in this context be illuminating with regard to Heidegger's intentions. On the other hand, there are instances where May's argument becomes one-sided by blatantly assuming that Heidegger's ideas concerning Being and Nothing would be almost impossible without the influences exerted upon him by the "alien" to the west- Eastern tradition and especially by Daoism (see esp. p 42-43 and 51-57). That this argument entails a certain interpretation on the author's part with regard to the possible ways of thinking opened up by the aforementioned thinkers is to my mind undeniable. Besides, it has been argued (Yannaras: 1998), with a rigour that matches May's argument, that Heidegger's thought regarding Being and nothing reveals certain similarities with that of Dionysius de Areopagite, whom Heidegger explicitly

interpretation³³ of Heraclitus and Parmenidis attempts to show. Irrespectively of whether we are willing to follow this Heidegger's move or not, we should emphasize that Heidegger speaks here of a "sameness" which has the "inexhaustible richness of what on every single day is as though that day were its first" (loc. Cit.) and has therefore nothing to do with an empty identification of the two great thinkers, who according to Heidegger were not yet "philosophers" ³⁴ (WP: 45).

mentions in the *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*. With this remark I do not aim at undermining May's contribution to Heidegger's scholarship, which indeed seems to me extremely significant. Nor do I wish to avert one's attention from Heidegger's interaction with the East, which as Parkes (1996) convincingly shows is also extended to a more direct exchange between Heidegger and modern Japanese philosophy, especially that of Kuki Shuzo. I am only concerned with the consequences of what could be called the "westernisation" of a series of thinkers, that being their violent incorporation – of which Heidegger himself is not innocent and the pre-Socratics are by no means the only victims – into a rigid line of development that philosophical thought has allegedly undergone. More emphatically put, I am of the opinion, that this peculiar genealogy, ever recurrent under many guises since Nietzsche's identification of Socrates as the "first theoretical man" and also encapsulated in the idea of "western metaphysics", has proved to be more of a *hindrance* to the attempt to "think thinking itself" than one might nowadays be willing to admit. Yet, one might still feel the need to ask whether the form that the West's obsession with overcoming metaphysics has assumed, prevents a genuine dialogue with past thinkers, the thoughts of whom lay bare, maimed, and lifeless in Procrustes' bed.

³³ I am referring here mainly to a precedent in Hegel's treatment of Parmenidis and Heraclitus. In his discussion on quantity in the *Science of Logic* and in attempting to show the fallacies resulting from Kant's alleged proof of the antinomies of pure reason, Hegel consents that the dialectical doctrines of the ancient Eleatic school, "especially those concerning motion... have for result the pure being of Parmenidis, in that in them is demonstrated the dissolution of all determinate being: they are thus themselves the *flux* of Heraclitus (Hegel 1969: 198). It goes without saying that contrary to Heidegger's account here the difference between the two doctrines is dialectically *sublated* in favour of becoming.

³⁴ Heidegger could be interpreted here as pointing towards a certain discrepancy, preserved in language, between the Ἀνὴρ Φιλόσοφος and the philosophical (*philosophish*; philosophique) man. Thus, Ἀνὴρ φιλόσοφος signifies someone who φιλεῖ το σοφόν (literally, "loves" the wise), which Heidegger interprets as an *attunement* to being expressed in the mode of Ἐν Πάντι. This "marvel", according to Heidegger, in order to sustain the attack of *sophistry*, had to be preserved by "men who trailed in the way which leads to this marvel", while this preservation took the mode of a *nostalgic tendency* towards the wise. In the process, the το σοφόν φιλεῖν as correspondence with, or attunement to the wise, becomes a "peculiar tendency towards the wise" which establishes φιλοσοφία (WP: 41-43). Arguably, this change signifies a loss; a loss of the Ἐν Πάντι understood as □ Κόσμος, as the light – or the Heraclitean fire – which brings entities to unconcealedness and gathers them in a unique collection (Heidegger, 1998b: 61). Here Heidegger provides us – in a manner that permeates his *oeuvre* as a whole – with a non-historiographical account of decline with regard to both the history of philosophy and history as such, since the two are thought by Heidegger in their belonging-together (see e.g. WP: 35). In technical/ historiographical terms his project of fundamental ontology was abandoned by the time he gave his Paris lecture entitled *What is That, Philosophy?* Nevertheless, I think that the question is asked from within the *problématique* opened up by *Being and Time*, at least as far as "the question of the meaning of being" and that concerning the "truth of being" (see e.g. Aylesworth 1993: xii) or what in the aforementioned lecture could be termed as "the question of the way to Being" are far from being incommensurable with one another. In the same breath,

Thus "the same" (το Αὐτό), is *first and foremost* to be construed as the *topos* where the possibility of a genuine dialogue with the philosophical tradition is opened up. A dialogue proper is construed in this context as speech in the sense of διαλέγεσθαι, which is also ομολογεῖν, viz. "saying what Being is as long as it is"³⁵ (WP: 55).

Therefore, if Heidegger wishes to avoid absurdity, his contention that Heraclitus' "doctrine of becoming" and Parmenidis' "doctrine of being", "say the Same", can only be interpreted in the sense indicated above viz. in the sense of an Ομο-λογία περὶ τοῦ αὐτοῦ.³⁶ *Secondly*, and by default, Το Αὐτό becomes the locus where from we could think the essence of man in its relationship to being, or rather man as *being* "essentially this relationship of responding to Being", and being "*only this*" (ID: 31-emphasis added). In what ways does this *pointer*

and although I wholeheartedly embrace Heidegger's intention to re-think along the pre-Socratics the origins of thought, to "step back" as it were from the modern technological "framework" and in keeping silent "to save thinking from humiliation" (see ID: 49 ff; Heidegger 1989: 57), I cannot but point once more to the reservations I raised earlier (n.20), while making here the additional point that, in my view, Heidegger's understanding of the West is pivotal to the construction of his account concerning the history of metaphysics. More cautiously put, it is crucial for us to discern the ways in which he defines Europe (Europa), the West (Abendland) and the East and to account for the position attributed by the thinker to the early Greek thought that flourished in Minor Asia (see e.g. the oscillating remarks on the issue throughout Heidegger, 1998b). In this respect, it is interesting to cite Remi Brague's remark concerning "Heidegger's negative attitude towards the Roman experience" of Europe, developed especially in his lectures on Parmenidis of the winter semester in 1942-1943 (Brague, 1992: 44). In other words, Brague argues that "Roman experience", having a secondary nature with regard to both its Greek and Jewish origins, is conceived by Heidegger as a loss with regard to the experience of an origin.

³⁵ Ομολογεῖν (ent-sprechen) is thus for Heidegger the most genuine mode of Dasein's *partaking* in Being; a partaking that is best exemplified in the dawn of thinking itself, in the great age of Parmenides, when "the saga of the being of the essent itself partakes of the (hidden) essence of the being of which it speaks" (IM: 98). What is perhaps intended here is the exemplification of a certain homology between being and being-human preserved in language in an ambivalent form (the homologous in ομο-λογεῖν) and of its verbal expression (i.e. ομολογεῖν as saying). I cannot help but linking this sense of ομολογεῖν with Heidegger's remark that Heraclitus "has described no phenomena; rather he has simply seen them" (Heidegger & Fink 1993: 14).

³⁶ This Heidegger's interpretation could be seen primarily as an attempt to overcome the traditional philosophical distinction between being and becoming, being and appearance, being and thought etc., in order to allow for a thinking which could grasp Being and Nothing in their belonging-together (see IM: 85). I think that this move is also consonant with his attempt to make Being thematic in a more efficient a manner than any previous philosopher.

succeed in going beyond the "zoological" definition³⁷ of human beings that according to Heidegger has shaped "the Western doctrine of man", having consequently defined the nature of "all psychology, ethics, theory of knowledge and anthropology"? (IM: 142). In pursuing this question, we could perhaps gain some insight with regard to the "being" and the "there"-being of Da-sein. Heidegger provides us with an interpretation of the often cited Heraclitean fragment³⁸ 53: "Πόλεμος πάντων μὲν πατήρ ἐστι, πάντων δὲ βασιλεὺς, καὶ τοὺς μὲν θεοὺς ἔδειξε τοὺς δὲ ἀνθρώπους, τοὺς μὲν δούλους ἐποίησε τοὺς δὲ ἐλευθέρους"³⁹. This Heidegger interprets in quite direct a manner to indicate

³⁷ This has to be an indirect reference to the Aristotelian definition of man as "ζῷον λόγον ἔχον" which according to Heidegger ascribes a certain animality to the human being (IM: 141-142). It is strange that Heidegger being so much concerned with the re-interpretation of the philosophical legacy of the west contents himself on this occasion with such an unambiguous translation of the word ζῷον. Accordingly, he is not able to investigate the possible *compass* between the Greek and the modern conceptions of animality and humanity. The compound word Ζῷ-ον (literally meaning *living being*) contains an explicit reference to the linkage between *life* and *being*, while the word animal makes explicit reference to the psychical (*anima* meaning wind, air; breath; life; soul, mind; ghost, spirit according to the Collins Latin Dictionary). It may be well known that Heidegger rejected the category of life as philosophically inappropriate (see e.g. Heidegger [1919/21] 1998: 15), but this hardly makes up for the omission pointed to above, since even if one wishes to follow this Heidegger's suggestion, one has still to consider that actually Heidegger only presents us with grounds for rejecting the *modern* concept of "life" and its applications in phenomenology. Actually, in his "Letter on Humanism" Heidegger acutely acknowledges the possibility of there being a different conception of "life" in Greek thought, but he all too readily covers this finding up, by collapsing ζῶν into "animalitas". Consequently, for Heidegger, with "*animal, zoon*, an interpretation of *life* is already posited that necessarily lies in the interpretation of beings as *zoe* and *physis*, within which what is living appears. Above and beyond everything else, however, it finally remains to ask whether the essence of man primordially and most decisively lies in the dimension of *animalitas* at all" (Heidegger, 1993: 227; see also his remarks on the issue in B&T: 47). Hans Jonas rightly alludes to a certain "verbal sophism" in this Heidegger's argument. With recourse to Plato's *Timaeus* (30c) Jonas concludes that "life" in its Greek conception refers to any animated being, ultimately to the "ensouled universe as a whole", and that consequently no "*lowering* of man is implied in placing him within that [cosmic] scale and the boggy of *animality* in its modern connotations is slipped in surreptitiously". More importantly, according to Jonas, what remains unacceptable for Heidegger is the "placing of 'man' in any scale, that is, in a context of *nature* as such" (Jonas, 1992: 333). This again is only made possible by the Christian devaluation of the "beast" and the subsequent contrast with "man", which allegedly signifies a break with the ancient position on the issue, since the immortality attributed to the human soul places human beings outside the sphere of nature. The "existentialist argument", consists then in a sophism, since in playing with the ambiguity of the word "animal", it "conceals this shift of basis of which that ambiguity is a function, and fails to meet the classical position with which it ostensibly argues" (Jonas, 1992: 333).

³⁸ This fragment came down to us via the works of Hippolytus. I cite the Greek edition of Heraclitus' complete fragments (1992: 76), which follows the standard edition of H. Diels and W. Kranz *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, Berlin, 1951; Heidegger also uses the latter.

³⁹ A standard translation would run "War is the father and king/master of everything (that is), and it shows those to be men and these to be gods, those to be slaves and these to be free". As it is the case with every

that the existence of human beings is the outcome of this πόλεμος⁴⁰, while the latter conditions the manifestation of humans the "separation of gods and men, in the eruption of being itself". On this basis, Heidegger (IM: 140) makes the following remarks:

1. The essence of being human is essentially a question and never an answer.
2. The character of this question is historical, or rather the question itself is "the very essence of history".
3. There is an essential bond between this question and the question concerning Being.

More importantly, the question concerning the human essence is said to be "historically meta-physical" and its adequate formulation⁴¹ lies therefore beyond the scope of traditional metaphysics "which remains essentially *physics*" (Ibid.).

single Heraclitean fragment, the text is quite obscure and it is regrettable that Heidegger does not give an account of the whole fragment but restricts his interpretation to the separation of the human and the divine. This way the part referring to slavery and freedom remains unconcealed, and while it is only logical to assume that the differentiation between slavery and freedom is a reference to social-historical developments, the indeterminacy of the sentence coupled with Heraclitus' notoriously enigmatic style which earned him the name of Σκοτεινός (the Obscure) does little to solve the riddle.

⁴⁰ It is quite important that in this context Heidegger avoids translating the word πόλεμος, thus maintaining the plurality of its significations in Greek. Indeed, πόλεμος could be understood as a cosmological principle pertaining to cosmic warring forces, as a social principle, or as an *ontological* principle, which accordingly permeates every possible level of analysis. Heidegger holds fast to this last signification, which is quite consonant with what Heraclitus says in fragment 79: "Εἰδέναι δὴ τὸν πόλεμον εὐνὰ ζυγόν, καὶ δίκην ἔριν, καὶ γινόμενα πάντα κατ' ἔριν καὶ χρεῶν", which can be roughly translated in the following manner: "We must know that war is common/universal and that strife is justice and that of necessity everything becomes of strife" (Heraclitus 1992: 84). It is in the light of this fragment that Heidegger attempts a translation of both πόλεμος and Δίκη which runs: "It is necessary to bear in mind setting-apart <Aus-einander-Setzung> as essentially bringing-together and order <Fug> as contending." (IM: 166). This interpretive attempt at a translation is in fact nothing less than an account concerning the age-old problem of the one and the many, of the coexistence of *diversity* and *unity*, as the following passage makes clear: "We know that this unity is never empty indifference; it is not sameness in the sense of mere equivalence. Unity is the belonging-together of antagonisms. This is original oneness" (IM: 138). I deliberately used above the expression "account" rather than "solution" to indicate the persistence with which this enigma defies thought throughout the history of philosophy.

⁴¹ In fact Heidegger suggests that the question be reformulated so as to read, "Who man is" instead of "what man is". This formulation would then have the double advantage of pointing simultaneously to the emergence of selfhood as a process peculiar to man's historical existence and to the relation of this emergence with the advent of being (see IM: 144). We can grasp better what is meant here if we consider Heidegger's contention that existence is the essence of Dasein, whereby existence "formally indicates that

These remarks are coupled by the thinker's attempt to reclaim νοεῖν for philosophy. Νοεῖν is here conceptualised in the specific mode of an apprehension⁴², which is linked with Being⁴³. What Νοεῖν signifies for Heidegger can be best understood if we take a closer look at the place that διανοια as "the unveiling exhibiting of something" (BP: 216) occupies in his thought.

Διάνοια, or understanding as "the unveiling exhibiting of something"-thought along the phenomenon of apophantic truth- signifies for the philosopher this possibility of the intellect in thinking as "a free comportment of the human being" to "meet suitably or to miss the entity that is given to it" (BP: 216-217). Assertion as "communicative-determinative exhibition" makes what is talked about in it accessible⁴⁴, in the manner of unveiling, of "letting-be-encountered", of "making manifest". Consequently, ἀληθεύειν, which Heidegger - in a move that goes simultaneously "back" to, and "beyond" its Greek origins - interprets

Dasein is as an understanding potentiality-for-Being, which, in its Being, makes an issue of that Being itself" (B&T: 274).

⁴² Apprehension does not stand in this context for a pre-defined faculty belonging to a "subject". It rather points to a process in which "man first enters into history as a being, an essence, i.e. (in the literal sense) *comes into being*" (IM: 141-emphasis added).

⁴³ In order to attain this formulation Heidegger takes recourse to Parmenides' eighth fragment «ταυτόν δ' ἐστὶ νοεῖν τε καὶ οὐκ ἐνεν ἐστὶ νόημα», which he renders "the same is apprehension and that (i.e. νόημα) for the sake of which apprehension occurs" (IM: 137).

⁴⁴ In a reference to Heraclitus, Heidegger interprets «λόγος φράζων ὅπως ἔχει» as "it (i.e. λόγος) tells how entities comport themselves", while insisting that for those who "are lacking in understanding, what they do remains hidden- λανθάνει...[and it therefore] sinks back into hiddenness". He is then able to conclude that in a pre-philosophical way of understanding it, the Greeks made it "self-evidently" basic that ἀλήθεια belongs to λόγος. It might be interesting to note that in proposing this definition of truth in *Being and Time*, Heidegger concedes that he has not yet "*shaken off the tradition*" but that he has rather "*appropriated it primordially*" (B&T: 262). Γεωργούλης (1992: 396-97) rightly suggests that this move consists an attempt to return to a path of thought opened up by Heraclitus, whereas Plato and Aristotle allegedly deviated substituting the *Idea* (ἰδέα) for the primordial phenomenon of ἀλήθεια. The implications of this reorientation for thought are quite significant since the abandonment of a "correspondence theory of truth" makes the ontological structures of beings perceivable, at least in principle. It nevertheless seems that in the development of his thought Heidegger abandoned the idea of there having been an original understanding of truth among the Greeks. Ruhn suggests that far from indicating a sheer failure, this development permitted the philosopher "to specify that in the end his thesis

as "to pluck something out of its concealment [λανθάνειν], to manifest or reveal", is now to substitute for truth in the sense of *veritas* (BP: 215). More importantly, truth as uncovering does not refer exclusively, or even primarily to entities in the world; it has rather to be construed as "a way of Being for Dasein". Of course, entities are uncovered and in this way we consider them to be true, but what is "primarily true" is Dasein, not only on the grounds of its being both the agent of and the necessary condition for all uncovering, but also because disclosedness "is that basic character of Dasein according to which it is *there*"⁴⁵ (B&T: 263).

It becomes thus apparent that for Heidegger, ἀλήθεια as the most "primordial phenomenon of truth" (loc.cit), viz. truth in the mode of disclosedness is tied up both with an understanding of being and with an illumination of the human Dasein, while the two are inseparable⁴⁶. In what way though does Heidegger think the nature of disclosedness and which is the fundamental characteristic he therefore attributes to Dasein? Two things seem to be of equal importance with regard to Heidegger's attempt to provide an answer to this question.

was never a historical-philological one, but rather a task for present and future philosophy to explore and articulate" (Ruin, 1994: 221-222).

⁴⁵ Ruin (1996: 224) suggests that in the horizon of *Being and Time* the account concerning Dasein's disclosedness indeed corresponds to its *there*-being and that it could be best understood as exhibiting what he terms "the totality of the hermeneutic situation". In this situation according to the author we experience a coming together of different levels of comportment: of "the historicity of Dasein, the hermeneutic exploration of Dasein, as well as of the meaning of being, and finally also the appropriation of the history of philosophy". It furthermore points to the possibility of the initiation of "philosophical questioning" itself (Ibid: 110). It has to be reminded that in Heidegger's thought the term "hermeneutic situation" denotes the totality of the "presuppositions" pertinent to any interpretation as they are expressed in our *fore-having*, *fore-sight*, and *fore-conception*. Accordingly, Heidegger's strategy in *Being and Time* is formulated from the standpoint of the clarification of those presuppositions, since if an Interpretation aims to be an *ontological one*, it is required that "in general the hermeneutical situation shall be one which has been made secure in conformity with the phenomena" and that "the *whole* of the entity" which this interpretation has taken as its theme "has been brought into the fore-having" (B&T: 275).

⁴⁶ A complementary formulation offered by Heidegger indicates that even the separation between human beings and Being is dependent upon or "comes to light in their *togetherness*". With regard to this originary separation which in fact is equally a belonging, the dichotomy between "being and thinking" is said to be derivative and devoid of meaning (IM: 141).

First, originary disclosedness is not any longer directly traceable through reference to the corpus of the philosophical oeuvres of the west.

Second, and by default, in order to recover the original meaning of ἀλήθεια we would have to seek for its possible preservation in more poetic modes of discourse handed down to us by tradition. In a manner reminiscent of Nietzsche, Heidegger turns then his gaze towards Greek tragedy and he attempts to locate the "poetic project of being human" in the chorus (lines 332-75) from the Antigone of Sophocles⁴⁷ (IM: 146). His interpretative project revolves around the first couplet of verses, wherefrom the significations pertinent to the rest of the lines are articulated:

⁴⁷ It is important to note that Heidegger explicitly rejects that his interpretation concerns Sophocles' thought as such; he does not even attempt to provide us with an interpretation of this tragic text (i.e. of the Antigone) as a whole. (IM: 148). The chorus being thus de-contextualized, it becomes virtually impossible for us to discern the reasons Heidegger had for attributing to it such a central character. It has been suggested that Heidegger made it central merely on the grounds that chorus praise Creon, the "impious dictator of the polis of Thebes", whom allegedly "Heidegger clearly regards as the authentic man par excellence". The point is then made that Heidegger is in truth alluding to Hitler himself and that his whole account of the Antigone is but an apologetics of Nazi politics (Burns 2000: 227-228). Although it is at best intriguing that Heidegger's account misses Sophocles' critical attitude against non-democratic regimes, this argument equally misses the ambiguity of the chorus lines in interpreting them as an unequivocal praise. In the textual context the chorus responds to Creon's anger that his command to leave Polynices' body unburied as a punishment for his revolt against his rule, was not obeyed. Creon is not yet aware that Antigone was the person who transgressed the law of the polis and his anger does not appease up until the end of the play, when he "comes to his senses" and realizes (lines 1090 ff.) that he is responsible for the deaths of his niece Antigone, his son Aemon and his wife Euridike. In this context, a comment on the compass between "Creon's law" and the law of the polis proper in classical antiquity, that being of the instituting of law under a *democratic regime* would have been quite fruitful for Heidegger's own reflections. This would not cancel nevertheless, either the violence inherent in human action, or the ambiguity inherent even in collective lawgiving. More importantly, Gadamer's (1998: 104-105) discussion of Aristotelian ethics pointed me to the possibility of Heidegger's choosing this passage from Sophocles as an *indirect* dialogue with Aristotle. For, if *ο δεινός* is used by Aristotle in contrast to *φρόνησις* to signify the person who *misuses power* by being indifferent to ethical postulates, then Heidegger might be very well trying to expand on –and perhaps subvert– the insight concerning the intellect that is constituted in such a manner as to disregard *good* and *evil*. Furthermore, unlike Hegel, Heidegger misses the opportunity to comment on the conflict between politics and ethics, between the law of the polis and the law of the family, or between what Sophocles says through Antigone about a certain compass between *human* and *divine* law. It might not be incidental that Heidegger opted to bypass the question of the aforementioned compass even in the case where Eugen Fink raised it explicitly in the Heraclitus Seminar (see Heidegger & Fink 1993: 25). What is most regrettable though, is that Heidegger does not comment on the closing verbal exchange

There is much that is strange, but nothing

That surpasses man in strangeness (IM: 148)⁴⁸

Heidegger insists that the Greek word δεινόν exemplifies in the best possible manner the Greek experience of man and one may add here without being unfaithful to Heidegger's intentions- of being. This experience has the advantage over the modern one, in that it points to the abysmal character of man's being as it does not content itself with the fixed attributes of personality⁴⁹.

Central in Heidegger's account is the notion of δεινόν as the powerful "in the sense of one who uses power, who not only disposes of power <Gewalt> but is

between Creon and the chorus, concerning fate, prudence, and mortality in their belonging-together (lines 1310-1324).

⁴⁸ The original reads: "Πολλὰ τα δεινὰ κούδέν ανθρώπου δεινότερον πέλει" (Σοφοκλής 1992: 52). Heidegger opts for translating δεινόν as "*unheimlich*", which in the English edition is rendered mainly to read "strange". We will have occasion in the development of the presentation to comment on the significance of Heidegger's appropriation of the verses. For the moment we will content ourselves with making the main significations of the word available to the reader. Δεινόν thus in ancient Greek could be normally used to denote: 1) the awesome, 2) danger or something dangerous, 3) the marvelous, 4) the mighty, 5) the intelligent or even the canny (Σταματάκος 1994: 248).

⁴⁹ Heidegger actually extends his argument to point out that "among the Greeks there were no personalities (and for this reason no supra-personality)" (IM: 148). This remark should be closely linked with his criticism of Karl Jaspers' employment of the notion of the person: "Rather, we need to see that experiencing in its fullest sense is to be found in its authentically factual context of enactment in the *historically existing self*. And this self is in one way or another the ultimate question of philosophy. It will not do to bring in the notion of the person on occasion and apply it to philosophical results" (Heidegger [1919/21] 1998: 30). If we try to interpretatively link both remarks, it can be said that on the one hand Heidegger points to the theological origins of the notion of the person, rejecting its employment on the grounds of its being originated outside the boundaries of legitimate philosophical-phenomenological discourse. On the other hand, the idea of the person is viewed by Heidegger as nothing more than a stale abstraction and therefore as an *obstacle* for the uncovering of the basic structures of the historical self. Thus, in a sense his analytic of the Dasein in *Being and Time* is prefigured in this early text on Jaspers.

violent ⁵⁰<gewalt-tätig> insofar as the use of power is the basic trait not only of his action but also of his being-there" (IM: 149-150- emphasis added). Given Heidegger's contention concerning the reciprocal nature of Dasein and Being it comes as no surprise when he attributes *violence* to be the main characteristic of the entirety of the essent (IM: 150). Dasein is then said to be the violent one in the qualified sense that its mode of being, belongs to the mode of being of the essent. This belonging together then is made manifest in Dasein's "fundamental violence", in its "making use of power against the overpowering" (loc. Cit). Heidegger seems to be convinced that only through the interpretation of δεινόν discussed above is it possible for thought to have access to Dasein's being fundamentally homeless. In fact homelessness is said to describe in the best possible way both Dasein's being in the "midst of the overpowering" and its ability to "surpass the limit of the familiar <das Heimische>" (IM: 151).

In a further appropriation of the chorus from the *Antigone*⁵¹, he treats the description of pantoporos aporos as a couplet, despite their being separated by a semi colon in the text (see n.39). Heidegger's translation of the transformed passage is then the following: "Everywhere journeying, inexperienced and

⁵⁰ Heidegger wishes to introduce a notion of violence that goes beyond the "common usage of the word, as mere arbitrary brutality". He thereby seems to imply that the latter is the product of a moralizing discourse, the standards of which are drawn "from conventional compromise and mutual aid, and which accordingly disparages all violence as a disturbance of the peace" (IM: 150). At another, more illuminating passage Heidegger also points to the detrimental character of value judgements for the grasping of the "mysteriousness of the essence of being human" (IM: 164). It is equally important to stress that in Heidegger's thought, "violence" is the essence of every hermeneutic appropriation. Thus, the attempt at retrieval of the "primordial" is always considered by the philosopher to be violent, and therefore it is violence that "governs the *task of destruction* of the history of ontology", which Heidegger announces to be his aim in paragraph 6 of *Being and Time* (see especially pages 44 and 49). There is nevertheless a problem regarding the violent nature of hermeneutic appropriation, namely that there is no criterion by which to ascertain whether the aforementioned violence succeeds in *recovering* an originary experience, or whether it is but a merely arbitrary violent act (see Caputo 1987: 63-64). It is furthermore dubious whether Heidegger's insistence on the violent character of being/ being human and of interpretation in general is not itself the product of the attempt to liberate his thought from the restraints of morality.

without issue, he comes to nothingness" (Loc.cit). He is thus able to conclude that what the passage really describes is man's violent making a path out of the familiar, only to be befallen by ruin and catastrophe (IM: 151-152).

Despite the merits of such an interpretation, it would be equally beneficial to turn briefly our gaze towards some crucial omissions underlying it. Undoubtedly, παντοπόρος and ἄπορος are closely bound in Sophocles' passage not only etymologically -the word πορος being their mutual component- but also in terms of meaning. It is therefore equally accurate to deduce from the text a sense of futility or nullity accompanying human endeavors as Heidegger does. We have nevertheless to ask ourselves whether the fact that the two descriptions are also kept apart is of no significance for a philosophical interpretation. In the context of Sophocles' text Παντοπόρος has the double significance of journeying and developing different aspects of τέχνη, especially those of language, thought, sheltering, and politics. Ἀπορος, by being directly linked to the future in the original text, is used to emphasise that human beings *never* confront something in the future without having any resources at their disposal⁵². The only thing that according to the chorus they cannot really

⁵¹ (lines 357-362) "και δυσαύλων πάγων υπαίθρεια και δυσομβρα φεύγειν βέλη παντοπόρος; ἄπορος ἐπ' οὐδὲν ἔρχεται το μέλλον; Αἶδα μόνον φεύξιν οὐκ ἐπάξεται..." (Σοφοκλής 1992: 54).

⁵² It is at first glance striking that Heidegger translates πορος exclusively as "way" or "path" omitting the word's equally important and philosophically celebrated meaning as "resource". In Plato's *symposium* (203 b-d) special significance is given to this second meaning, since *Eros* is considered thereby to be the begotten son of Poros (Resourceful, Richness) and Penia (Poverty). *Eros* is then considered by his nature to be in an intermediate state of being between richness and poverty and more importantly between *wisdom* and *ignorance*. This makes it possible for Plato to argue in 204 b that "ἀναγκαῖον τὸν Ἔρωτα φιλόσοφον εἶναι" (Πλάτων 1994: 145), which in Nehamas' English translation (see Plato 1997: 487) is rendered "It follows that Love *must* be a lover of wisdom". Now, although it is debatable whether *Eros* should be translated as Love, the important point here is that the passages cited above inaugurate the understanding of philosophy as *Eros*, while it can be said that the latter acquires the status of an ontological principle. Heidegger's omission seems less intriguing if we consider his insistence that philosophy as *Eros* is a secondary experience and that it signifies already a decline from the original avènement with being (see also n.22 above). Nevertheless, the theme of *Eros* permeates Greek literature on the whole and is of a far more ancient origin than classical antiquity. Traces of it can subsequently be found in the so-called *Orphic Texts*, where for instance *Eros* is called "the son of the everlasting night", and to whom is

confront is death, something that is not missed in Heidegger's own translation⁵³.

Heidegger follows the same strategy with regard to the lines that -always according to his interpretation- explicitly point to the polis as the historical place where the unconcealment of being-human is inaugurated. Here he capitalizes on the antithesis between Υψιπολις and Απολις, the former indicating the praised citizen, the latter the disgraced one, someone who because of one's own actions does not deserve to bear the name of the citizen any longer⁵⁴. What is important in this reading is the close linkage that Heidegger wishes to establish between the historical and the political, always from the perspective of the disclosure of human essence as this latter emerges from Dasein's partaking in Being.

The powerful is rendered again the overarching principle of this disclosure and Heidegger turns his gaze to the tragic dimension of historical-political creation. According to this line of thought, the very same principle (i.e. power) that allows certain humans to become historically pre-eminent (υψιπολις) is also responsible for their being considered as outcasts, that is as απολις (IM: 152).

attributed- in Heideggerian terms- the quality of being the deity that was first brought to unconcealment: "...κυδρόν Έρωτα, Νυκτός αιγινήτης υία κλυτόν, όν ρα Φάνητα οπλότεροι κλήζουσι βροτοί, πρώτος γαρ εφάνθη" (Όρφικά κείμενα. 1999: 17, line 15). What is more, even in the *Antigone* Sophocles feels the need to quote the famous passage from Homer's *Iliad*, devoted to Eros' invincible nature, its omnipresence and its taking hold of both gods and men making them manic. Heidegger unfortunately did not think it necessary for his purposes to pay heed to this passage in his interpretation of the text. The passage though, is perhaps unsurpassable in poetic beauty and full of quite important significations and it is regrettable that here, for reasons regarding the economy of the text, I quote but the part of it, which reinforces my argument: "Έρωσ ανίκατε μάχαν, Έρωσ ός εν κήμασι πίπτεις...και σ' ούτ' αθανάτων φύξιμος ουδεις ούθ' αμερίων σε γ' ανθρώπων, ο δ' έχων μέμνηνεν" (Σοφοκλής 1992: 85, lines 76-84). In light of this, it seems quite plausible to conclude that although Heidegger attributed to the experience of being as violence a primordial character, the obliteration of the experience of being as Eros on his part should not be considered as any less detrimental for his account of philosophy.

⁵³ "Through no fight can he resist the one assault of death" (IM: 147).

⁵⁴ The connection is clearer in Sophocles' text (lines 364-374) than in Heidegger's interpretation (see Σοφοκλής 1992: 54).

It is therefore the act of historical creation as such that exemplifies this double aspect of power, in that it at the same time founds history as place and expels the founders out of it⁵⁵. Now, it is certainly not the first time that this state of affairs is grasped in thought, nineteenth century German philosophy being the most recent⁵⁶ attempt to come to terms with this peculiarity of the historical realm. The question would then be formulated as follows: In what way does Heidegger attempt to reinterpret here the age-old problem of historical praxis, conceived at first as τραγική ειρωνία (tragic irony) by the Greek tragic poets, and subsequently given the interpretations of the cunning of reason by Hegel and of the eternal recurrence of the same by Nietzsche?

There are arguably three elements that grant Heidegger's interpretation its peculiar power:

First, history is given an indeterminate ontological status by being placed in the midst of the overpowering Being and man's violent making a path out of it.

Second, this making a path out of Being, does not only entail Dasein's being expelled from the historical place of the polis as mentioned above; it equally signifies Dasein's being entangled in this very path and consequently Dasein's being in a state of *self-exile* from Being (IM: 157).

⁵⁵ "Pre-eminent in the historical place, they become at the same time *apolis*, without city and place, lonely, strange, and alien, without issue amid the essent as a whole, at the same time without statue and limit, without structure and order, because they themselves as creators must first create all this." (IM: 152-153). Goudeli (1999: 273) rightly interprets this Dasein's exemplification qua *δενότατον* as being directly linked with the self-realisation of Dasein's radical finitude. Ironically, always according to this reading, the aforementioned realisation of futility, meaningfulness and nullity *becomes* in Heidegger's thought the essential element of Dasein's "meaningful existence", in signifying a "dignified redemption from...original finitude, an [heroic] act of artistic despair", which exemplifies "*the impossibility of the confrontation of man with the prevailing whole, and yet the hidden charm of this vain battle...*" (emphasis added). It has to be remarked though that Heidegger was well aware of –and tried to refute– similar interpretations of his work. One such occasion is when the philosopher attempts to discredit a view that would see his lecture on "What is metaphysics", as simply a defence of a "philosophy of anxiety", or of a "heroic philosophy" (see Heidegger, [1943] 1998: 234).

⁵⁶ "Most recent" is here meant with regard to Heidegger's own undertaking.

Third, history as place is conceived as the stage for the disclosure of the overpowering⁵⁷, the latter being confirmed *qua* history in human works (IM: 167). The complementary character of the three aforementioned elements is quite easily detectable. The first and third elements address the historical from the aspect of Being and from that of the Dasein in their belonging-together, while attempting to avoid a reification of the historical as such. This move is also quite consonant with Heidegger's understanding of a reciprocal unconcealment of Being and of historical Dasein's own essence, already mentioned above.

The second aspect becomes of crucial importance once we reconsider Heidegger's insistence about a concurrent forgetfulness of being and an absorption by everydayness characteristic of modernity, and his life long attempt at recovering the originary experience of the couplet Dasein/Being, with recourse to its manifestation in the *inception* of history.

If we could momentarily leave aside an assessment of the consequences of extrapolating an *inception* in history⁵⁸ without providing any justification for this, it would be quite useful to attend to Heidegger's understanding of this historical origin, since it is quite illuminating with regard to his interpretation of authentic historicity as fateful repetition in *Being and Time*.

⁵⁷ This Heidegger's thought is quite enigmatic in that it actually places the *requirement* of history as place of disclosure *equally* on Dasein's and on Being's part. The relevant passage reads: "Man is forced into such a being-there, hurled into the affliction <Not> of such being, because the overpowering as such, in order to appear in its power, *requires* a place, a scene of disclosure" (IM: 162-163).

⁵⁸ Evidently what is meant here is an inception of history with regard to pre-historical times, the becoming human of the human species, or put in the phenomenological jargon the extrapolation of a historicity as against a pre-historicity, not explicitly present in Heidegger's work but nevertheless developed later by Patocka in his *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*. Without disregarding the difference between Heidegger's and Patocka's elaborations, it is worth noting that such a distinction brings Heidegger closer to the view he is trying to refute than he would be willing to admit.

1.2 The Notion of the Origin and Authentic Repetition

In contrast to "scientific" accounts prevalent until the turn of the twentieth century, which depict history as a progression from an allegedly deprived state of affairs experienced by proto-humanity to the superior one of modernity, Heidegger introduces a far richer, perplexing, and indeed inexhaustible conception of the beginning as the "strangest and mightiest" (IM: 158). It might be useful to point from the outset of our investigation to accusations raised against this Heidegger's interpretative twist, and which detect in it nothing more than a nostalgic tendency towards an elusive origin⁵⁹, a pessimistic or even hostile attitude towards modernity, autonomy and technology⁶⁰, or a politically perilous and ideologically charged apologetics⁶¹ of historical and political retrogression.

⁵⁹ In a discussion with Richard Kearney, Derrida comments: "there is still in Heidegger, linked up with other things, a nostalgic desire to recover the proper name, the unique name of Being. To be fair, however, one can find several passages in which Heidegger is self-critical and renounces his nostalgia: his practice of cancelling and erasing the term [i.e. Being] in his later texts is an example of such a critique" (Kearney 1984: 110). Charles Guignon describes this nostalgic tendency in Heidegger's thought as a "*mythos* of pristine beginnings, a time of *falling*, and a final recovery of origins" as a recapitulation of "the traditional Christian model of creation, sinfulness and redemption" (see Guignon 1992: 141).

⁶⁰ Rorty's criticism of Heidegger links directly Heidegger's hostility towards technology and his political attitude, while implying a certain relapse to metaphysics on Heidegger's part (Rorty 1989: 118). It is important though that in Rorty's depiction, and perhaps due to Rorty's own attempt at keeping the private separate from the public, Heidegger's figure remains equivocal and his *oeuvre* is not rejected as a whole. Accordingly, for Rorty "...Heidegger as a philosophy professor who managed to transcend his own condition by using the names and words of the great metaphysicians as elements of a personal litany, he is an immensely sympathetic figure. But as a philosopher of our public life, as a commentator on twentieth century technology and politics, he is resentful, petty, squint-eyed, obsessive – and at his occasional worst (as in his praise of Hitler after the Jews had been kicked out of the universities), cruel." (Ibid: 120).

⁶¹ See for example Habermas' (1992: 194, 198- 200) criticism, according to which the whole idea of *fate* signifies an ideological commitment to Nazism, while historicity as the ontological precondition of history as derived from the existential analytic of *Dasein*, amounts to a sheer abstraction from concrete, real history. Habermas attributes this "mischief" partly to Heidegger's personality and partly to his "solipsistic method", which promulgates a radical breach between the natural sciences and the "*Geisteswissenschaften*", while exposing Heidegger's ignorance regarding the developments in the social sciences, especially those that occurred in France and the U.S. (Ibid: 190).

While it would be indeed perilous to opt for ignoring these accusations, it could be equally fallacious to bypass an assessment of the philosophical import that Heidegger's interpretation bears for contemporary thought.

These objections are also important in that they point to a certain discrepancy between accounts that make the societal explicitly thematic and accounts that focus primarily on the ontological question. In other words, in the course of this investigation we will attempt to make thematic the very compass between social theory and ontology, as articulated from the standpoint of history.

Let us first occupy ourselves with the question of retrogression. It is indeed doubtful whether Heidegger's insistence about the inexhaustible richness of the origin should be seen as a mere philosophical defence of retrogression. If this were the case then we would have nothing but a naïve inversion of the concept of progress, which would entail the incorporation on Heidegger's part of an element of causality and consequently a blatant relapse into the metaphysical concept of time he struggled to overcome.

Heidegger though, understood the beginning of historical humanity as this breach in the midst of Being, "into which the preponderant power of being bursts in its appearing, in order that this breach itself should shatter against being" (IM: 163). This is why he conceptualised disaster neither as a failure of the objectives set out by historical peoples, nor as a miscalculation in the course of historical action, but as the most fundamental trait of historical existence (IM: 162-63). There is in fact an insoluble ambiguity regarding the place occupied by "disaster" in this account, for disaster is said to be equiprimordially the "deepest and broadest affirmation of the overpowering", viz. of Being (Loc.cit). How should we understand this last statement? Our

task becomes even harder if we combine it with Heidegger's understanding of history as the required stage for the disclosure of being, already referred to above. Heidegger's selection of the words requirement and affirmation is certainly enigmatic, while it momentarily puts our thoughts to a halt, for it would be too easy and perhaps too naïve a solution to infer that he is thereby ascribing a predetermining activity to Being. Is Heidegger not instead directing his thought in this peculiar and mysterious linkage between the being of the essent and being-human, in this coexistence of strife and unity that history attests to?

It seems though that we still find ourselves entangled in a circle, where everything is generated⁶² from power, consummated by power and resulting in new manifestations and configurations of power. Or rather, power is the inexhaustible principle that unifies as λόγος and sets apart as ἐπίς, it is conceived as the main feature of both the essent as a whole and of Dasein's existence.

Interestingly, far from providing us with a sheer cosmological principle, Heidegger introduces a further determination of power as expressed by the strangest of all beings, namely Dasein. Here Dasein is understood as acting violently against being by concealing it, by declining "all openness toward it", by denying its omnipotence the site in which to manifest itself." (IM: 177). We have thus to consider to what extent, this "violent breach" in the midst of being that

⁶² Here of course I am not referring to a generation of Being by a kind of Supra-being, but to states of affairs occurring within the essent, as well as to historical events allegedly resulting from the mysterious linkage between Being and human beings. We must also keep in mind that Heidegger is still in this context occupied with an interpretation of Heraclitus and Parmenides, and consequently with an interpretation of "Ἐν Πάντι", which for Heidegger does not have the meaning of the "one and only" which subsequently generates everything out of itself, but the meaning of "unifying" everything that is (Heidegger and Fink 1992: 21). Moreover Heidegger is adamant that a Supra-being is inconceivable in the context of Heraclitus' thought (Ibid: 46).

Heidegger understands history to be, entails the concealment or obliteration of being that his philosophy attempted to uncover. Again, the question arises as to whether the aforementioned uncovering is at all viable. In other words, it is possible that Heidegger here points to a certain impenetrability of Being. History as place could thus be interpreted as having a twofold significance: It could be the theatre whereby both human beings and Being simultaneously manifest themselves, but as such a place it could equally provide the condition for the concurrent concealment of both Being and the human "essence". It follows that such an admission would entail further philosophical implications regarding the nature of presence as such, since it would then ascribe to it a certain incompleteness, or unattainability.

Furthermore, in Heidegger's thought, this concealing is not the only affliction against Being that Dasein is capable of. Capitalising on the ambiguity of the word "being" in its concurrent application in Being and human being-there, Heidegger suggests that it is *death*, this "end beyond all consummation", this "limit beyond all limits" (IM: 158), this "not-being-there" that constitutes the "supreme victory over being" (IM: 178). Echoes of Heidegger's treatment of death in *Being and Time* are easily recognisable; we thus have to treat his enigmatic utterance about "the supreme victory" from the double perspective elaborated by the thinker in the second division of his *magnum opus*. Heidegger attempts there to ground Dasein's authentic potentiality of being-a-whole, coupling it with Dasein's ability to maintain itself constantly, its connectedness of life, while attempting to show how Dasein stretches itself as it were between birth and death. One could remark that this conception of a stretching implies in itself the notion of incompleteness, which in the context of Heideggerian

thought is best exemplified once we turn our gaze to the paradoxical nature of one of the poles of the abovementioned stretching, namely death. The two poles of this ecstatic relationship are therefore asymmetrically treated, at least with regard to their potential contribution to an existential, and therefore "ontologically adequate"⁶³, interpretation of Dasein's nature. It is uncertain⁶⁴ whether we could interpret Heidegger's one-sided investment on the notion of death as an indication that he considered birth⁶⁵ to be less equivocal and therefore less philosophically important a concept.

It seems more likely though that the centrality attributed to death by Heidegger is mostly related to death's overall place in the history of philosophy⁶⁶ and to its

⁶³ It has to be reminded that for Heidegger only an existential interpretation can provide us with a clarification of the entities under consideration in ontologically adequate a manner (see B&T: 276, and in relation to the interpretation of death, see Ibid: 376-77).

⁶⁴ There are passages in *Being and Time* that render such a claim rather improbable. On occasion Heidegger himself recognises the one-sided direction of his interpretation (e.g. B&T: 425), while in another place he is adamant that neither death nor birth can be seen as external to Dasein and in this sense as accomplished. Accordingly, for Heidegger "Understood existentially, birth is not and never is something past in the sense of something no longer present-at-hand...Factual Dasein exists as born; and as born, it is already dying, in the sense of Being-towards-death. As long as Dasein factually exists, both the 'ends' and their 'between' are, and they are in the only way which is possible on the Basis of Dasein's Being as care (B&T: 426).

⁶⁵ In the philosophy of Hannah Arendt birth is given a central place and the concept of natality, signifying the "new beginning inherent in birth", is primarily linked with *action* and therefore with the political realm. By making natality the central category of the political, Arendt subsequently attributes mortality to metaphysics, and although any explicit reference to Heidegger is missing, one cannot help but wonder whether this is not a point raised against this aspect of his philosophy (see Arendt 1958: 8-9). It might be interesting to point out that with regard to both "birth" and "death" Husserl emphasized that by belonging to a higher dimension, they "presuppose such a tremendous labour of explication pertaining to the lower spheres that there will be a long time before they can become problems to work on". In other words he considered the clarification of the problems of transcendental subjectivity and inter-subjectivity as a *necessary precondition* for the subsequent illumination of the aforementioned concepts. This can be regarded as an indirect criticism to Heidegger, since Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations* are posterior to *Being and Time* (see Husserl 1964: 142 and 156).

⁶⁶ Obviously, Plato's *Phaedo* (80e) inaugurates the long history of the concept, where Socrates defines philosophy as "Μελέτη Θανάτου". Derrida (1995: 12- 13), rightly points to the affinity between this μελέτη or επιμέλεια, i.e. this "attentive anticipation of death, the care brought to bear upon dying" and Heidegger's concept of care (*Sorge*). He also expresses the amazement that many a reader must have experienced in reading *Being and Time*, when he refers to the fact that Heidegger does not quote Plato's *Phaedo* "not once...not even in the passages devoted to care or to the being towards-death" (Ibid: 14). Indeed, Heidegger only acknowledges the long history of the concept of death in Christian theology "from Paul to Calvin's *meditatio futurae vitae*", and then goes on to briefly consider its place in the philosophy of Dilthey, Simmel, and Jaspers (B&T: 494-495, n.vi (H. 249)).

fitting best Heidegger's treatment of authenticity. Heidegger employs in fact a tripartite distinction between an authentic, an inauthentic and an undifferentiated mode of Dasein's comportment, attributing the possibility of an ontological interpretation of Dasein to the examination of the state of affairs resulting from Dasein's authentic comportment, while ascribing everydayness, this "Being which is *between* birth and death" to the remaining two modes (B&T: 276). It could be said that Heidegger gets again himself entangled in a circle, since death serves as the criterion for demarcating authenticity from the other modes of comportment, while such a demarcation remains nonsensical if it is not presupposed. Nevertheless, Heidegger wishes to arrive at an authentic interpretation of death by first showing the *aporias* pertaining to this phenomenon itself and the consequent inadequacy of everyday experience to grasp it in essence. Death is therefore said on the one hand to signify the attainment of "wholeness"⁶⁷ on Dasein's part, in the sense that Dasein has

⁶⁷ In this context *wholeness* should be rather understood in its *ironic* dimension as an exhaustion of one's "potentiality-for-Being", as an annihilation of one's "Being towards" one's possibilities for Being, which nevertheless *does not amount to a completion proper*, to the fulfilment of an essence. (see B&T: 279). Furthermore, in what should rather be understood as an allusion to Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* Heidegger attempts to establish the different modes of fulfilment pertaining to the essent and to Dasein, with recourse to the metaphor of the fruit, which in ripeness "fulfils itself". Of course in Hegel's case the introduction in the *Preface* of the aforementioned *Bildung* metaphor aims at an illumination of the nature of *truth*, and the gradual –and according to mainstream interpretations also *progressive*– transformations it undergoes in human thought, and this is why Hegel says of the bud that in the end "the fruit emerges as the truth of it" (Hegel, 1977: 2; for a detailed account regarding the use of *Bildung* metaphors in Hegel's *Phenomenology* see Solomon, 1983: 241-249). It is nevertheless arguable that the notion of fulfilment in Heidegger, especially with recourse to Dasein should be understood always in connection with truth as *αλήθεια* and it is in this context that we interpret this Heidegger's move as an attempt to differentiate his thought from Hegel's. Indeed, Heidegger recognises that although with "its death, Dasein has indeed fulfilled its course", this does not in any way signify the exhaustion of its "specific possibilities", since "even unfulfilled Dasein ends" and "Dasein may well have passed its ripeness before the end", while "for the most part Dasein ends in unfulfilment, or else by having been disintegrated and being used up (B&T: 288). It is worth noticing that in Adorno's relentless critique of Heidegger the ironic dimension we attempted to indicate above is altogether missed, or rather it is not recognised as such, and Heidegger is said to propound Dasein's wholeness "despite historical experience" testifying to the contrary. Furthermore, this wholeness is according to Adorno merely formal, since it "cannot be the unity of the content of real life", it cannot be "sought in life as harmonious, articulated, and continuous in itself". Consequently Dasein's unity must be sought in a third term, alien both to life and Dasein, viz. death

reached its "potentiality for being". On the other hand even this qualified sense of "completeness" entails the impossibility of experiencing Dasein as an entity, so that this "gain becomes the utter loss of Being-in-the-world" (B&T: 280). Furthermore, even the experiencing of the death of others teaches us that the "end of the entity *qua* Dasein is the *beginning* of the same entity *qua* something present-at-hand", in the peculiar mode of "Being-just-present-at-hand-no-more"⁶⁸ (B&T: 281-282). Heidegger is here referring to the multiplicity of ways that the dead remain "in-the-world", that being in community with the living ones, as they do not cease to be the "object of concern" for those "left behind" in the rites dedicated to the commemoration of the dead. He also wishes to indicate that this way of experiencing death is always defective with regard to the actual experience of the "loss-of-Being as such which the dying man *suffers*" (Loc.cit). The death of others is furthermore conceived as an obstacle to the attainment of an authentic comportment towards death in yet another, no less important a manner. Whereas in the first instance Heidegger attempted to show that there is of necessity a remainder of experience to which we have no access when we attempt to grasp the dying experience of others, now he wishes to show how the death of others conceals the apprehension of one's authentic understanding of one's own death.

Not surprisingly, the public sphere, the impersonal Das Man is conceived as the basic agent of the aforementioned concealment, while this concealment

(Adorno 1973: 145-146). It is worth noticing that at times even interpretations more sympathetic to Heidegger seem to miss this ironic dimension in simply stressing that "we can think of a human as a *coming-into-presence* that comes to fulfilment throughout its life-time" (Guignon 1992: 132). Although a corrective interpretation is furnished later in the text, when Guignon asserts that Heidegger attempted to show "the possibility of *constancy*" (Ibid: 139), the ambiguity still vanishes.

⁶⁸ Heidegger here implies that what we encounter this way is not a being of Dasein's mode but something relegated to the status of an entity, which is either present-at-hand or ready-to-hand.

is supported by Dasein's being for the most part "in the untruth", that being by covering up the ownmost possibilities of its being. Accordingly, Das Man provide Dasein with a formal and therefore "empty" interpretation of death which in turn gives Dasein an "inappropriate certainty" concerning the unavoidable of death. This certainty amounts to a sheer illusion in that it remains "objective" or "empirical" in the guise of the "death of Others" and fails to relate to Dasein's own self, while veiling the indefinite character pertaining to the possibility of death⁶⁹. In other words Dasein fails to perceive its own death as being possible at any moment.

Conversely, the realisation of the aforementioned possibility on Dasein's part entails Dasein's ability to comport itself authentically towards death. Authentic "Being-towards death" is then considered by Heidegger to be grounded on Dasein's ability of being-ahead-of-itself in projecting itself, and therefore on the existential-ontological phenomenon of care.⁷⁰ Now, this being-towards death is understood as a mode of being whereby Dasein "is dying factically and indeed constantly, as it has not come yet to its demise", while this dying has the character of an orientation towards an authentic or inauthentic stance with regard to death that allegedly defines Dasein's becoming at any point of time

⁶⁹ It is really striking that Heidegger completely underestimates the role of *emotional affection* and its importance in shaping one's own comportment towards death. Adorno (1973: 150) interprets this omission as consisting strong evidence of Heidegger's philosophy being "solipsistic". Although this Adorno's assertion should not be treated as an apodeictic statement, it should be admitted that this omission should rather be attributed to the overall negative attitude Heidegger held towards anything public, and which arguably resulted in a less fruitful depiction of the compass between the impersonal "public" and human beings as non-interchangeable existents. Nevertheless, it should be also admitted in light of the abovementioned remarks, that a more fruitful interpretation of Heidegger's philosophising is still possible, given that appropriate attention be given to the ironic dimension of death referred to above.

⁷⁰ It should be reminded that in Heidegger's elaboration *care* (*Sorge*), stands for the fundamental structure of Dasein (Biemel 1993: 61), which cannot be traced back to "some ontical *primal element*, just as being cannot be explained in terms of entities". It follows that Care must be conceptualised as a state of being always already underlying Dasein, and which is related to *perfectio*, to man's transformation "into what he

(B&T: 303-304). Death's revelation as a possibility in the sense mentioned above results in an "anticipation" of this possibility by terms of which Dasein discloses "itself to itself", wrenches itself away from Das Man and consequently discloses the possibility of its (*non-relational*) authentic existence, since the non-relational character of death "as understood in anticipation, individualises Dasein down to itself" (B&T: 307). Thus, in this context we are presented with a conception of freedom, which has the characteristics of a deliverance from Dasein's falling in Das Man. At the same time, it is conceived as a freedom of choice⁷¹ between authentic and inauthentic existence, between the painful process of self-discovery and self-affirmation on the one hand and the oblivious surrendering to Das Man on the other.⁷² Moreover, authentic being is characterised by anxiety as opposed to fear, which is a defective or inauthentic mode of anxiety, since it is always directed towards entities encountered within

can be in Being-free for his ownmost possibilities", while it is also pertinent to Dasein as an entity *surrendered or thrown* to the world of its concern (see B&T: 240-244).

⁷¹ Adorno interprets this as an advocating of *decisionism* and as an indication of a certain reification of the subject on Heidegger's part, which in turn results in an obliteration of the societal and historical determination imposed upon the subject. Adorno (1973: 128), having accused Kierkegaard, "the grandfather of existential philosophy" of defining "right living" entirely "in terms of decision", attempts to further ground his criticism on Heidegger's contention that Dasein is in "each case mine", which Adorno interprets as a turning on Heidegger's part of the "Hegelian dialectical unity of the general and the particular...into a relation of possession" (Adorno 1973: 114-115). Although Adorno's criticism with regard to Heidegger's overall ambivalent attitude towards the societal and the ontic is well founded and justified, it seems quite plausible to suggest that the accusation discussed above must rather be seen as the outcome of a polemic against what Adorno defines as existential philosophy in general and Heidegger in particular, than of a sober judgement. Again, Guignon has rightly suggested that this kind of criticism against *Being and Time* overlooks the emphasis that this work puts on Dasein's being embedded "in a wider communal context", while he goes on to suggest that "to say that Dasein is *thrown possibility* is to say that our agency is always situated in a cultural context that provides the pool of possibilities from which we draw our concrete identities as agents of particular types." (Guignon, 1992: 130).

⁷² It is important to note that since care is an existential ontological phenomenon it must also apply to inauthentic comportment, otherwise the whole conception of Dasein becoming authentic would be absurd. Accordingly, although Dasein's being-ahead-of-itself is primarily construed as a departure from the "they-self", even in being inauthentic Dasein is said to remain "essentially ahead of itself...in face of itself as it falls, [and it] still shows that it has the State-of-Being of an entity *for which its being is an issue*" (B&T: 238). Biemel rightly suggests that since care is grounded structurally on temporality and its three ecstatic modes (i.e. past, present, and future), the *future* should play an important role also in the case of inauthentic Dasein. Unlike authentic Dasein though, inauthentic Dasein concerns itself with *everydayness* and consequently the "inauthentic future" has the character of an "awaiting" (*gewartigen*) (Biemel, 1993: 65).

the world (B&T: 234). On the contrary, being-anxious⁷³ is conceived as disclosing the world *qua* world, while by virtue of this disclosure Dasein's Being-free for "the freedom of *choosing itself and taking hold of itself*" becomes manifest (B&T: 232). Thus, being-towards-death, anticipation, and anxiety are conceived as resulting in Dasein's freedom towards death, which is again theorised in terms of a release "from the illusions of the they"

Most importantly, this state of affairs entails the concurrent disclosure of the nullity of Dasein's existence, its "thrownness to death" and results in the emergence of "anticipatory resoluteness" (B&T: 311 and 356). With this move, Heidegger seems "anxious" to establish the possibility of authentic historical comportment, grounded ontologically on the phenomenon of care and existentially on that of death. Accordingly, the authentic anticipation of death on Dasein's part and the resultant authentically resolute comportment are said to provide Dasein with the possibility of choosing its goal among the many possibilities offered by tradition, by "pushing" its existence into its "finitude" (B&T: 435). In truth, Heidegger is hereby paving the path for the introduction of the notion of authentic historicity in the mode of fate as authentic repetition.

⁷³ Heidegger's discussion of anxiety links explicitly Heidegger's thought in *Being and Time* with the writings of Kierkegaard. Although it is beyond the scope of this study to trace the specifics of the relationship between the two thinkers, it is worth noticing that according to some interpretations this relationship is deeper and more substantive than Heidegger himself would like to acknowledge. Accordingly, it has been argued that Heidegger's project does not consist in raising Kierkegaard's *ontico-existential* analysis to the level of ontology, or as ridng it of its theological concerns, as Heidegger himself would have it. Rather, three interconnected and basic Heideggerian notions, viz. "the constancy of the self", "temporality" and "repetition", are seen as "directly drawn from Kierkegaard's writings". More importantly, the main difference between the two authors is understood as the lack on Heidegger's part of this *ironic* dimension bestowed upon Kierkegaard's writings by the pseudonymity of his authors. In this sense, the argument goes, Heidegger can be said to have taken "Johanes Climacus at his word", and therefore from a Kierkegaardian point of view, *Being and Time* could be said to be enframed in this nexus of significations that Kierkegaard calls "direct communication". Furthermore, this reading traces a tension in *Being and Time* between the aforementioned Kierkegaardian motifs and "Husserl's dream of a universal phenomenological science", which allegedly prevented Heidegger from fully appreciating the "demands of the thoroughgoing destruction of the history of ontology" (Caputo, 1987: 82-83).

Given that authenticity is understood by Heidegger as that which "constitutes...[Dasein's] *most extreme possibility of Being*" (Heidegger, 1992: 10E), it is not surprising that authentic historicity as a concept serves as the ground for any understanding of history and for historiology as science. History, time and death are in this context thought together in a manner, which does not grant them a status external to Dasein's existence. In other words, they are neither entities nor experiences encountered by a subject in time⁷⁴ but on the contrary, they *are* Dasein, since they are grounded upon, and therefore are in conformity with, Dasein's ecstatico-temporal nature. Heidegger attempts to bring all the aforementioned elements coherently together in the following, crucial passage:

*Only an entity which, in its Being, is essentially futural so that it is free for its death can let itself be thrown back upon its factual "there" by shattering itself against death - that is to say, only an entity which as futural, is equiprimordially in the process of **having-been**, can, by handing down to itself the possibility it has inherited, take over its own thrownness and be in the moment of vision for 'its time'. Only authentic temporality which is at the same time finite, makes possible something like fate - that is to say authentic historicity. (B&T: 437).*

It is at first striking that Heidegger chooses the word fate to describe a phenomenon that properly understood concerns human freedom as expressed

⁷⁴ In this sense one has to agree with Francoise Dastur that death "is not an end in the sense of what puts a stop to Dasein but is, on the contrary, the foundation of its finite existence. In the same manner, the finitude of time...is not an extrinsic limitation of Dasein but, on the contrary, the origin and starting point of its very own Being, i.e. of all possible projection- a limitation which, because it is internal, makes possible its own surpassing, i.e. makes possible both ekstasis and transcendence" (Dastur, 1996: 165).

in the enactment of historical-political praxis and self-affirmation. Again, one might not but wonder whether the conception of authentic historicity as repetition necessarily follows Heidegger's elaborations on the three ecstatic modes of temporality, or whether it is also intended as a critique towards philosophical or scientific accounts that conceived of modernity as a radical break with tradition. How are we then to understand Heidegger's insistence for the need of an appropriation of the inheritance? Again, how should this inheritance be understood and what kind of repetition does it entail? Is there not a tension inherent in this kind of reasoning, a gulf between what is unprecedented and exceptional in history and that which merely reproduces itself as it were?

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter I attempted to show that Heidegger's fundamental ontology is not incompatible with critical conceptions of history. On the contrary it was argued that if considered together these conflicting accounts can provide us with a more adequate framework wherefrom to think the social historical realm. I also attempted to show how Heidegger's conception of history as place has the advantage of linking the very notion of history with that of meaning and how it points to the enigmatic relationship between Being and being-human.

I hope I have convincingly established that far from presenting us with a solipsistic conception of the human being, Heidegger manages to capture the elusive relationship between the individual and collective modes of historical praxis, despite the fact that the mode of being of both the collective and the individual is said to be primarily inauthentic. The attempt will be made to

further elucidate the nature of historical praxis in the following chapter, by juxtaposing Heidegger's understanding of authentic historicity as fateful repetition with Castoriadis' defence of historical creation in the mode of an unconditioned emergence of "the radically new".

Chapter Two

The Dynamics of Historical Time: A Narrative on Heidegger and Castoriadis

Introductory remarks

The attempt has been made so far to exemplify the close relationship between Heidegger's recasting of the fundamental question of being and his account of historicity in *Being and Time*. This was furthermore coupled by the intention to draw the reader's attention to the perplexing linkages and impasses between an understanding of historicity as *the* mode of being peculiar to *Dasein*, and what is commonly understood under the rubric of "real" or "concrete" history. In this chapter, the aim is, by temporarily suspending any judgement concerning the alleged incompatibility of the aforementioned principles, to contrast Heidegger's account of historicity with Castoriadis' understanding of the social historical, so as to attain a more detailed picture of the problem in question.

Before venturing a more detailed elaboration of the aforementioned two philosophical accounts, it should be noted that in Castoriadis' thought the concept of historicity bears different significations than in the case of Heidegger. Thus, it mostly denotes a state of affairs peculiar to the institutions of *Logos* and *Techné*, in other words it directly refers to the social/historical institution, while it signifies unique states of affairs characterised by indeterminacy, discontinuity, rupture with the "familiar" and the "ordinary", and ultimately unpredictability. It has become almost customary to think the problem of

historical time in close connection with the problem of *time per se*. While it is difficult to establish the *specific mode of the relationship* between a certain understanding of time and a "corresponding" understanding of historical time, it is still worth trying to examine the interrelations between them. Thus, the strategy of the present excursion in the thought of Heidegger and Castoriadis will be to first turn our gaze towards their respective critiques of "traditional" or "inherited" conceptions of *time*.

2.1 Time, Creation, Institution: Castoriadis' critique of Inherited Thought

In his paper "Time and Creation" Castoriadis begins his critique of "inherited" conceptions of time by arranging them in the following schema: Time is usually conceived either as objective i.e. as Cosmic time, as a "receptacle and dimension of whatever may appear and as an order and measure of this appearance", or as Subjective, that being time as lived and experienced by a subject, or by collective subjects⁷⁵ (Castoriadis 1997: 374).

In either case, what is postulated is the existence of time as such, which provides the grounding of the two aforementioned categories of time, and which makes possible their "mutual adjustment, or at least accommodation and correspondence" (Loc.cit). It should also be noted that Castoriadis in the opening paragraphs of the same paper expresses his intention to argue for the inseparability of time from being, and for the actual existence of different

⁷⁵ Actually the author treats the concept of the subject in the widest possible manner, so as to include individual human beings, distinct historical-societal formations, and different animal species. Thus the "various subjective times" refer to "mine [time], yours, the time of the Aztecs and the time of the Westerners, the time of the whales and the time of the bees- that is, the varieties of private times or times for a subject" (Castoriadis 1997:374).

categories of time (Castoriadis 1997: 375). According to Castoriadis, this multiplicity of times is covered up by philosophy, since from Plato to Heidegger the common attitude of philosophers has been to work with a "radical separation" between subject and object, a state of affairs brought to its extremes with the emergence of idealist and materialist philosophies. More importantly, what gets allegedly mystified by the positing of the aforementioned "polarized couple" is the *social-historical*, "both as proper domain and mode of being and as the de jure and de facto ground and medium for any thought" and by implication as the domain responsible for the creation of "subjectivity" (Castoriadis 1997: 776-377).

Consequently philosophy finds itself entangled in the *aporias* stemming from the postulation of two incompatible modalities of time, namely one reified/identitary mode⁷⁶, which would account for the totality of physical experience, and another mode, "subjective in the derogatory sense of the word". In an explicit reference to Heidegger this latter mode makes the existence of both a "public" and a "cosmic" times either absurd or the sheer outcome of Dasein's fall into the everydayness and inauthenticity of "the they" and of the subsequent forgetfulness of "Being" in Dasein's encounter with particular "beings".

⁷⁶ In Castoriadis' terminology "identitary", "enseidic", and sometimes "ensemblistic/identitary" are used with reference to a certain modality of reason, allegedly dominant in the context of "Greco-Western" thinking, the essence of which is best exemplified in the mathematical logic of "sets" or "ensembles". This modality is itself grounded on one of the dimensions of the social-historical institution, namely on the dimension which makes possible distinction, choice, assembly, counting and speech (see Castoriadis 1987: 221-223). It should be noted that although this modality is according to Castoriadis the product of the *self creation* of the social/historical institution, it is still made possible due to the state of affairs described by the thinker as "society's leaning on nature". Castoriadis summarises this complex schema in the following manner: "...identitary logic, like [the institution of] *legein* is equivalent to an ontological decision concerning what is and the manner in which it exists...A decision that is at the same time the expression of a creation, of an ontological genesis...We cannot think of this creation without a relation *sui generis* of

By making the social historical the starting point for any philosophical endeavour, Castoriadis wishes to dissolve one set of aporias generated by the philosophical tradition and at the same time to bring to light another set of aporias, presumably inaccessible to inherited reasoning (Castoriadis, 1997: 378). The first task is then to be performed through a cursory discussion of Aristotle and St. Augustine's theories of time, the former being understood as an "eminent proponent" of the cosmological/objective definition of time, the latter as the archetypal figure for any subjective theorization on the issue. By way of anticipation it can be said that the basic strategy deployed by Castoriadis in this short discussion of the two thinkers, is to show how each of the two approaches necessarily has to admit elements pertaining to the other approach. In the case of Aristotle, Castoriadis, not wishing to address all "the intricacies, richness, subtlety and solidity" of Aristotle's argument, focuses mainly in what is usually accepted as Aristotle's definition of time⁷⁷ in the fourth book of *Physics*, and according to which "Time is a number [numbered number, measure] of movement according to before and after" (Castoriadis 1997: 379). Now, although time for Aristotle is not itself change, but the measure of change, Castoriadis discerns in the abovementioned definition not only a certain privileging of the spatial dimension –despite the fact that in the Aristotelian ontology change pertains also to essence, to quality, to quantity and to place- but also and more importantly, a belonging together of some "locally defined" movement and of time.

partial support on what was there before...[which] is the leaning of society on the first stratum, or natural stratum, of the given" (Castoriadis 1987: 227).

⁷⁷ The relevant passage (*Physics*, book D, 219a16-219b6) reads: "ὅταν δὲ τὸ πρότερον καὶ ὕστερον, τότε λέγομεν χρόνον τοῦτο γάρ ἐστιν ὁ χρόνος, ἀριθμὸς κινήσεως κατὰ τὸ πρότερον καὶ τὸ ὕστερον. Οὐκ ἄρα

It is this spatiality of time that in Castoriadis' view brings about the "subjective" element in Aristotle's "cosmological" narrative, since -Castoriadis asserts- "any spatial ordering is, of necessity, arbitrary". Thus inevitably, Aristotle is forced to admit the role of the individual psyche in taking cognisance and in putting into order the experiences generated by spatial alterations (Castoriadis 1997: 379-380).

Now, it has to be remarked that it is by no means evident how clear-cut the distinction between a cosmological and a subjective theorization of time is in Aristotle's thought. Suffice it to say for the time being that Aristotle wishes to address (Physics 223a20 ff) the *aporia* concerning the possibility of the existence of time in the absence of the psyche. This *aporia* is of course pertinent to Aristotle's definition of time as number, since it is absurd to think of a *measurement* in the absence of anyone endowed with the ability to perform the actual act of measuring, or for whom measuring has a meaning. Castoriadis treats this aporetic state only cursorily, and in conclusion he formulates Aristotle's position in the following manner: " (a) the soul itself can produce a natural substratum through its own movement...and (b) the actualisation of time as measure of the movement entails the activity of the soul" (Castoriadis, 1997: 384).

In a similar vein, the attempt is made by the philosopher to show the inevitable emergence of an objective, or cosmological dimension in Augustine's account of time. The central *aporia* in Augustine's thought is traced in the fact that Augustine has to postulate again a measurement of time by its duration, because of a "stretching of the mind" (*Distentio Animi*).

κίνησις ο χρόνος ἀλλ' ἡ ἀριθμὸν ἔχει ἡ κίνησις. Σημεῖον δὲ τὸ μὲν γὰρ πλείων καὶ ἑλάττω κρῖνομεν

This measurement has two presuppositions, equally significant for Castoriadis' critical position. First, the postulation of time as a "created" entity, and second the ad hoc conception of the equivalent of the a priori capacity common to all subjects to experience time in the same order as given in the schema of expectation, attention, and memory (Castoriadis, 1997: 380-82).

The treatment of Augustine is revealing with regard to Castoriadis' intentions: It can be clearly seen that the real targets of his criticisms are not the thinkers of antiquity. Augustine provides Castoriadis with an excuse to attack Kant, Husserl and Heidegger, not only –and certainly not primarily– on their ideas on time, but on the entirety of their philosophical projects⁷⁸. Similarly, Aristotle's allegedly "cosmological account" serves as a vehicle for Castoriadis' criticisms against modern mathematical physics; hence his

αριθμῶ, κίνησιν δὲ πλείω καὶ ἐλλὰτω χρόνω ἀριθμὸς ἄρα τίς ὁ χρόνος" (Αριστοτέλης, 1997:168-170).

⁷⁸ It might even be possible to argue that Castoriadis does not criticise philosophers primarily on the grounds of their being unsuccessful regarding their conceptual labour, but on the grounds of their severing their ties with the body politic and of consequently assuming a role similar to that of the *prophet*. It should not be incidental that the major criticism raised against Plato by the thinker is that he allegedly wanted to be "above the city" and thereby "betrayed the spirit of his master" more than any other of Socrates' disciples. Indeed, this criticism informs Castoriadis' ambivalent position towards Plato (Castoriadis, 1991: 5-7). On the one hand the great ancient philosopher is either ridiculed or accused –in what I personally find the least conceptually valid, aesthetically refined and historically informed of Castoriadis' points – as the conscious forger of the Athenian history, the disgraced enemy of Democracy and the first inventor of Stalinist methods in history (Ibid: 8), while on the other hand asserting that Plato has to be regarded as being indeed the greatest philosopher of all times. More importantly though, Castoriadis considers Plato to be the inaugurator of the philosophical *school*, an innovation allegedly alien to the ethos of the Greek world as exemplified by the concomitant emergence of democracy and philosophy within the *polis* through the free and public interaction of independent/individual philosophers. Castoriadis is to my knowledge one of the few contemporary thinkers having some insight regarding the importance of the schools, although he mainly draws negative conclusions from this. To my knowledge, Kant (1787/1929: 32) –who speaks with sheer contempt and caution for "the ridiculous despotism of the Schools" meaning both ancient and contemporary ones– is perhaps the modern philosopher who stands closer to Castoriadis with regard to this issue, although with both thinkers one gets the idea that they focus primarily on one aspect of the consequences of the existence of schools, viz. the aspect concerning the *lack of criticism* in the development of their arguments, or what amounts to the same thing *their introvert, anti-public character*. It seems to me though that they do not fully explore the consequences logically following their common premise, namely that because of the prominence of the philosophical schools in antiquity, *it is possible* that we lack the means to adequately interpret the writings of ancient philosophers, not only due to the historical distance that separates us from them, or due to an ambivalence inherent in language, but also because –as products of the thought of schools– those writings might have been intended as *riddles* for the non-initiated.

contention that time conceived as a "fourth dimension" indicates nothing more than a spatialization of time, an "empty" abstraction which could be performed for an infinite number (n) of dimensions without altering anything in our conception of the three-dimensional space, that being without disrupting the identitary conception of time (Castoriadis, 1997: 390-91). Furthermore, this critique, in order to be meaningfully carried out has to be socially-historically significant in two interrelated senses. In other words, it has to argue for the possibility of a different conception of time and history, while grounding this possibility on the social-historical as such, so as to account for the necessary and consequently bounding character of such an innovative conception. It is only in this manner that Castoriadis' persistent remarks concerning the grave implications following the covering up of the social-historical make any sense. In the place of the commonly perceived polarity between an objective time attributed to nature and its subjective counterpart, Castoriadis wishes to introduce a third and allegedly overlooked element, that being the social-historical. From the outset of this introduction Castoriadis emphasizes the need to avoid collapsing the different categories of time, in insisting that "time is irreducible to society" (385).

The picture becomes more complicated with the introduction of another crucial element, that of the psyche. We are told that the "true polarity" is not that between society and individual- we might also add not even that between the philosophical "object" and "subject"- but between society and psyche. This displacement enables Castoriadis to introduce further distinctions and to

To my knowledge, no major contemporary philosopher has taken such an implication seriously, Castoriadis not being an exception in this respect.

postulate a difference between conscious and unconscious psychical times⁷⁹, the plural in this context being crucial for the admission of the impossibility to postulate a single time pertaining to every singular human psyche.

Additionally, "public time" is accounted for in two overlapping ways: First, every social-historical formation is theorized as a "subject" in its own right, as "a-being-for-itself" (386), which is understood as a precondition for its existence and -possibly- for its subsequent development. In this context, public time is primarily the product of the social-historical instituting, and this accounts for the internal differentiation between an eneidic and an imaginary dimension that public time undergoes, in conformity with the respective "moments" of the institution (387). Secondly, public time is made possible, in the sense of being both acceptable and perceptible by the psyche through the process of socialisation, the "product" of which is the "social individual".

This schema actually presents us with a riddle, for the eneidic/identitary dimension of socio-historical institutions by and large, and hence the identitary moment of the instituted public time, is said to have "a mysterious equivalent" in the world itself (389). In other words, we are here, as in many other instances in the work of Castoriadis, introduced to the conception of an enigmatic "leaning on the first natural substratum" as the necessary, although not also sufficient, precondition for the existence of every social-historical formation. The enigma does not consist of course in the admission that there must be something in the universe "allowing" human life to evolve, but in Castoriadis' attempt to exempt the core imaginary dimensions

⁷⁹ It is only regrettable that Castoriadis did not pursue any further his thoughts on unconscious psychical times. As it is, we can only agree with him regarding the importance of further illumination of the issue and the difficulties involved in this effort.

of both the collective and the psychical from this "natural determination"⁸⁰. With this exemption, Castoriadis wishes to introduce the concept of time as the "emergence of otherness" or of time as creation, while securing meaning as an exclusively human attribute⁸¹.

If in physics the conception of time as the "fourth dimension" aimed at a revolutionary conception of the universe that would inform a break with the confines of Euclidean geometry, then it could be said of Castoriadis that his conception of time as a simultaneous creation and destruction of forms aims to be a "fourth dimension" proper with regard to the conceptualisation of history. In a quite illuminating passage Castoriadis emphasises that "the fact of creation has nothing to do with the quarrel about determinism" and that it only defies the "absurd idea of a homogeneous universal determinism that could reduce

⁸⁰ Castoriadis is thus adamant that "as for all nuclear social imaginary significations...[the content of imaginary time] is essentially independent of any substantive leaning on the first natural substratum: it is a pure creation of the society considered" (Castoriadis, 1997: 388). Leledakis (1999: 97) rightly underscores another aspect of the aforementioned problem, namely that Castoriadis' emphasis on signification "both on the level of the social and on that of the individual unconscious", the postulation in other words of "a determinant – but in itself indeterminate – level of social imaginary significations behind and beyond social practice...seems to introduce a kind of underlying *essence* beyond the realm of social phenomena, while it denies any specificity to the level of social practice, except to the extent that it is reducible to significations".

⁸¹ Having established the multiplicity of social creations as a "fact" Castoriadis asserts that this indicates a certain quality of the world, namely that it "is tolerant and indifferent to all these creations". The inference to be drawn from this is according to the thinker that "the world must be void of meaning. It is only because there is no *signification intrinsic to the world* that humans had, and were able to endow it with this extraordinary variety of strongly heterogeneous meanings" (Castoriadis, 1997: 389). Two things are striking in this conception... First, the absence of any "dialogue" with, or even reference to the precursor of similar ideas in the context of modern European thought, viz. Nietzsche. Second, the somehow hasty nature of the conclusion, which in itself is the product of a "disenchantment" of the world, since in the new polarity between society and psyche the world is "reduced" to a "mysteriously tolerant first natural substratum". How is then the human ability to signify to be understood? If it is a *part* of the "world", what does it mean for signification to be exempt from "natural determination" and how is "nature" conceptualised? Castoriadis could be content in replying that history is possible "because there is no language of Being" (Loc. Cit), but in truth neither the existence nor the absence of meaning are subject to anything like a "proof".

levels or strata of being (and their corresponding laws) to a single ultimate and elementary level"⁸² (Castoriadis 1997: 393).

Consequently, creation indicates the openness characteristic of the social world- and possibly of the universe- the always-active possibility of the emergence of new *eide*, of "other determinations" (Ibid: 392-393). This conception is supported by two crucial and interrelated distinctions established by the thinker, viz. the distinction between otherness and difference, and the subsequent one between condition and determination. Thus, "otherness" signifies alteration in the guise of the creation of something "new" and unprecedented, of something that cannot be directly derived from the existent multiplicity, in short it is peculiar to a new *eidos*.

In contradistinction, "difference" indicates the infinite determinations, combinations, and reproductions of the given, what Castoriadis calls "repetition of the identical", while its nature is best exemplified by the logical operations of mathematics⁸³.

⁸² This passage makes clear that Castoriadis' conception of creation does not wish to dispense altogether with the idea of operative *laws*, but rather attempts to indicate the intricate character and complex nature of the laws pertaining to states of affairs of different orders. Arguably, the basic motive behind this move is the freeing of historical *praxis* from a sterile conception of causality, imported to history from a domain radically alien to it, namely the domain of the first natural substratum. Castoriadis formulates this in the following manner: "This logic – and the ontology that is homologous to it – far from exhausting what there is and its mode of being, touches only the first stratum; but at the same time, its internal exigency is to cover over or to exhaust every possible stratum...Physicalism and logicism, causalism and finalism are only ways of extending the exigencies and the basic patterns of identity logic to society and to history" (Castoriadis, 1987: 175). The alternative to inherited conceptions of society and history that Castoriadis proposes is to think of the mode proper of the social/historical as that of a *magma* or of "a *magma* of *magmas*". Interestingly enough, Castoriadis makes clear that with the introduction of the magma metaphor he does not mean to identify the social/historical with *chaos* but to indicate the existence of "the mode of organization belonging to a non-ensamblist diversity, exemplified by society, the imaginary or the unconscious" (Castoriadis 1987: 182).

⁸³ The examples that Castoriadis offers to illustrate this distinction are quite illuminating. In order to highlight difference Castoriadis draws his examples from geometry and mathematics, while in order to indicate otherness he refers to literature and society: "Thirty-four is different from 43, a circle and an ellipse are different. The *Illiad* and *The Castle* are not different- they are other. A horde of baboons and a human society are other". More importantly, human society is for Castoriadis the exemplification of

Likewise, the emergence of new *eide* is theorised as conditioned by the pre-existing forms, but not determined by them, determination understood primarily in this context as necessity and generation. Arguably then, the first term of each of the aforementioned couplets has to fall within the domain of the imaginary/creative dimensions, while the second terms correspond to the eneidic/identitary dimensions of being and the analogous dimensions of the social/historical. Does this conceptual schema remove the difficulties involved in Castoriadis' attempt to free historical praxis from determination via the introduction of the concept of a human/societal creation grounded ultimately on the abyss of significations and of the unconscious?

Castoriadis' (1997: 392) paradoxical definition of creation as creation *ex nihilo*⁸⁴ but not *in nihilo* or *cum nihilo* can only be understood with recourse to the distinctions drawn above, although in reality little does it succeed in removing the ambiguous ontological status⁸⁵ of the conception itself.

otherness since "it exists only as the emergence of a new form (*eidos*) and embodies such a form" Castoriadis, 1997: 392).

⁸⁴ In order to illustrate some of the conditions of this creation Castoriadis asserts that "humans create the world of meaning or signification, or institution, upon certain conditions, namely that they are already living beings that there is no constantly and bodily present God to tell them what is the meaning of the world and of their life... But there is no way to derive either this level of being- the social-historical- or its particular contents in each case from these conditions" (Castoriadis, 1997: 392-393). Useful as this sentence may be in concretely presenting Castoriadis' argument, it does not really shed light on his conception of the *nihil*, since contrary to ordinary conceptions of it, nothing is pronounced to be something, though of a different order. Accordingly, although one cannot but agree with Kalyvas' (1999:111) insistence on the aforementioned Castoriadis' distinction having often been overlooked despite deserving especial attention on the reader's part, one finds it difficult to follow his somewhat hasty attempt to interpret the distinction exclusively as indicating Castoriadis' awareness that one could not "dispense once and for all with the material effects of the capitalistic forms so as to permeate the entire flesh of the social, thereby infiltrating the structures of the material production of society as well as the mechanisms of its symbolic self-alteration". Useful as this interpretation may be, it re-inscribes Castoriadis' thought exclusively within the Marxist narrative, while overlooking the obscure but challenging ontological dimensions of Castoriadis' argument.

⁸⁵ Leledakis (1995: 118) rightly senses this when referring to the problem concerning "the level of the existence of social imaginary significations", although I find the word "level" rather inappropriate and misleading. The author furthermore suggests that it is possible to interpret the existence of the magma of social imaginary significations and the moment of the institution as a "negative essence" of the kind introduced by Derrida with his notion of *différance*. Alternatively, always according to Leledakis the

True, the expression 'ex nihilo' does not indicate the absence of any ground⁸⁶ along which creation takes place and the created is erected, since socio-historical creation is always takes place in the midst of cosmos and of pre-existent socio-historical configurations. More importantly, the creative act presupposes and is based upon both the magma-like nature of significations and the respective modality of the unconscious, as well as the commensurability between the enselidic dimensions of the social/historical institution and the qualities of the first natural substratum. Castoriadis wishes to bypass these problems by pointing to the necessity for a radical alteration in the conception of the meaning of "being"⁸⁷.

The novelty of this conception lies in the attribution of an ontological status proper to the very idea of *eidōs*. In order to philosophically sustain his argument Castoriadis develops an interpretation of Plato's *Timaeus*, which focuses mainly on Plato's conception of *chora* as the receptacle of "everything that is" and on the role the ancient philosopher ascribes to the divine *demiourge*. On the one hand, Castoriadis (1987: 189) wishes to draw parallels

magma could be ascribed to individual unconscious and then projected to the social. Regardless of the usefulness of these formulations, especially viewed from the perspective of Leledakis' argument, viz. the possibility of tracing elements pertaining to a structuration theory in Castoriadis' writings, I would still prefer to put the question in a wider ontological context and not restrict it to the relationship between the social and human agency.

⁸⁶ Castoriadis explicitly refers to "the ground on which it [i.e. society] acts" in his discussion of the self-concealment of the social/historical (Castoriadis, 1987: 213). Although it is not clear how philosophically rigorous the conception of the "ground" is in Castoriadis' thought, the self-incurred play between concealment and unconcealment is an extremely interesting point.

⁸⁷ The entirety of traditional philosophical discourse allegedly rests upon the assumption concerning the need to avoid the unnecessary multiplication of beings. Castoriadis thinks that this attitude reveals the existence of another rule, operating at "a deeper level", which can be formulated in the following manner: "do not multiply the meanings of being; being *must have* a single meaning" (Castoriadis, 1987:168). In other words, according to the thinker, within the confines of inherited thought the multiplicity of the modes in which beings come to the fore has to be traced back to an *origin*. This origin is thus understood as being proper, inalterable and imperishable, while all other beings are conceptualised as *deficient* in this respect. It is on those grounds that Castoriadis places Heidegger's questioning of the meaning of being within the discourse of the philosophical tradition, while characterising the Heideggerian conception of the

between Plato's Chora, "visible as in a dream, partaking of the sensible and the intelligible but being neither one nor the other, *formless form*"⁸⁸ and Kant's treatment of space and time as pure/ abstract forms of intuition, in order to show the impossibility of thinking of time as an empty form, without reducing it to space. Moreover, this reductive understanding allegedly reflects the illegitimate transcription of a postulated, fallacious, determinant, a-temporal *aet* on time⁸⁹ itself, while it amounts to the concealment of time as alterity, supposedly exemplified by the incessant self-creation of the institution.

On the other hand, Castoriadis' brief commentary on the Platonic conception of a divine creator, serves the double aim of undermining in one *coup de force* any ontology of both a Christian and a Greek origin, both of which according to the thinker conceive of creation solely in terms of re-production⁹⁰. In order to exemplify his conception of Creation Castoriadis in very Greek a

ontological difference as "impossible to maintain", and as just exposing "the limit of inherited thought" (Ibid: 182).

⁸⁸ This is achieved via a contestable identification of the Platonic chora, the ancient conception of topos and the modern conception of space, which also serves as a vehicle for the thinker's attack on modern physics. Hence, according to Castoriadis "this separability-inseparability of the Receptacle...and of *what* is there shows up again in contemporary physics, with general relativity: energy-matter 'is' the local curvature of space-time and, moreover, the global properties of space time 'depend' on the quantity of energy-matter that it 'contains'." (Castoriadis, 1987: 189).

⁸⁹ "For, once being has been thought of as determinacy, it has also, necessarily, been thought of as atemporality. All temporality, henceforth can be but a secondary and derived modality; the only question that then remains (and continues to torture philosophy throughout its history) is the possibility of different determinations that do not annihilate identity, hence of the Plural" (Castoriadis, 1987: 192).

⁹⁰ Thus Castoriadis (1987: 196) contends that "Creation, within the framework of inherited thought, is impossible. Creation in theology is obviously merely a pseudo-creation; it is producing or manufacturing", while it is thus "predetermined and entirely determined starting from the elsewhere and the atemporal always of God; it takes place once and for all, once and for always". Now, with regard to this last point it has to be remarked that not all philosophical accounts incorporating so-called "religious motifs" address the problem of creation in so static a manner. To my knowledge a good example of a more dynamic conception of creation is Max Scheler's idiosyncratic interpretation of Christianity and of German Idealism. Now, although it is beyond the scope of this paper to address the complex issues stemming from Scheler's thought, it might be interesting to note that for Scheler the shaping of the world by the Logos is theorised as an incessant process, as the outcome of historical praxis, which evidently requires the active agency of human beings, while the emergence of man and of God is viewed as concomitant and the two terms as mutually dependent (see Scheler, 1989: 149-151).

manner introduces the image of the sculptor, arguing that by the artisan's giving form to the raw material a new essence or *eidos* is created.

In case this shaping is unprecedented and original⁹¹ it would then be appropriate to speak of a creation proper, while this creative act is amenable to reproductions or imitations. More importantly, the main features of every creative act are considered to be its indeterminate character and its social-historical origin (Castoriadis, 1987: 197). Two interrelated and complementary issues are quite important regarding this Castoriadis' conception.

The first concerns Castoriadis' insinuations that inherited ontology is but the product of the self-concealment of the social-historical, which results in a projection of the institution's own qualities to a postulated "beyond".

The second refers to the thinker's contention that this "reversal" of the relationship between the Cosmos and the institution can primarily be understood on the level of philosophical discourse as the outcome of an illegitimate identification of Being with matter⁹² and of the human being's inability to create matter⁹³.

An extreme interpretation of this thesis developed by Castoriadis would arguably ascribe a creative dimension solely to the social-historical, diminishing

⁹¹ The main difficulty involved in such a conception of novelty and originality is arguably that the *criterion* employed for such a demarcation can be either itself the product of the core significations of a given socio-historical formation and hence of *relative* value, or else it should be postulated as *normatively* valid with reference to some trans-historical principle, e.g. with reference to universally valid principles of reason. It has to be remarked though, that this last possibility runs counter to Castoriadis' line of reasoning.

⁹² It is important to note that according to the thinker this is a common feature of all philosophical accounts, an unfortunate meeting point between idealism and materialism (see Castoriadis, 1987: 199).

⁹³ It is very interesting that Castoriadis (Loc.cit) explains every interpretation of "man" as a finite being as a lamenting of exactly this deprivation, of the human beings' incapacity to create "a speck of matter", which in turn gets mistaken as an inability to create in general. In my opinion this is an extremely important point made by Castoriadis, which could have been further developed towards a direction that the thinker did not opt to follow, namely that of technology. In other words, it would be extremely interesting to investigate the extent to which the "core significations" constitutive of modern technology are immersed in a desire to surmount human finitude by "creating a speck of matter".

thereby the role of the Cosmos to the performance of mechanically conceived processes.

Nevertheless, in what follows this line of argumentation won't be pursued, since the best it could achieve would be a mere reversal of what the thinker attempted to liberate thought from⁹⁴.

Instead, and perhaps in spite of Castoriadis' own intentions, we shall direct our gaze towards the very conception grounding Castoriadis' idea of creation, namely the extrapolation of a struggle between autonomy⁹⁵ and heteronomy, the two terms of this polar couplet signifying a concomitant societal-individual state of affairs.

Moreover, we shall pay heed to the two corresponding modes or "moments" of the institution, namely the moment of instituting and that of its being instituted. The former, being directly linked to the imaginary is understood as the very exemplification of what the thinker calls radical imagination and it could therefore be considered as the institution's creative moment *par excellence*, as the ontological ground of historical change and of revolutionary activity, while being the very exemplification of the last two; in short, instituting is conceived by the thinker as praxis.

On the other hand, the modality of "having been *instituted*" is conceptualised as the source of the reification and autonomization of institutions, causing therefore constant obstacles to the enactment of human autonomy.

⁹⁴ It would be unfair both to Castoriadis' ethos and to the depth and scope of his thought if we were hereby to arrive at the sterile conclusion that all the dimensions of the universe can be collapsed into the creativity of the social-historical, or alternatively to accuse the thinker of reductionism.

⁹⁵ Arguably, autonomy is the pivotal concept in Castoriadis' thought, the centre wherefrom his whole conceptual apparatus is deployed and articulated, bearing at the same time a quite strong normative significance. On those grounds, I personally found Haritopoulos' (2001: 261) description of Castoriadis' *oeuvre* as "a metaphysics of autonomy and imagination" both quite imaginative and illuminating.

Historical freedom, the freedom to bring new elde, new laws, new institutional forms into existence should thus stem from a society's capacity to continually reshape its institutions, from its capacity to resist its being subjugated to, and alienated from, the products of its own doings.

If Castoriadis' theorisation of this double moment of the institution can be here interpreted as his tribute to the *tragic dimension* of historical existence⁹⁶, then we could interpret freedom as an incessant striving towards taking place within the "frame" provided by the aforementioned moments. How should then "autonomy" and "heteronomy" be understood in the context of Castoriadis' thought, or to phrase it somewhat differently what is their proper status?

The question seems crucial to this reader, mainly because we encounter on a different plane the same paradox that we noticed earlier regarding Castoriadis' explanation of novelty and its dependence on the criterion of originality. In other words, a self-defeating element can arguably be traced in Castoriadis' contention that the significations embodied in institutions are specific socio-historical *creations*, so that the "emergence of primary significations" like those of the "Hebrew God, the Greek polis", etc cannot be either "explained" or deduced (Castoriadis 1994/1997b: 332).

⁹⁶ I think that this is vividly depicted in the tension between Castoriadis' recognition of the fact that "almost all [known] societies have instituted themselves as heteronomous" and his belief that there is in the universe "at least a type of being [i.e. the human being] capable of altering its mode of being" (Castoriadis, 1991: 31). There is yet another important dimension of the "tragic" in history to which Castoriadis turns briefly his gaze in the discussion of the signification of a supposedly "internal" logic governing the development of historical events, where he briefly questions the grounds on which "great historical events" are given the "appearance, which is more than an appearance, of a tragedy that is admirably worked out and staged, at which at times the obvious mistakes of the actors are absolutely unable to prevent the result from occurring" (Castoriadis, 1987: 46).

Undoubtedly, Castoriadis' position would involve interpreting the former signification as the exemplification of heteronomy⁹⁷ *par excellence*, while the signification of the Greek polis would represent for him this breach in historical time that made the inauguration of the project of autonomy possible. It would then seem that a set of identifications is hereby postulated by the thinker, viz. the identification between heteronomy and self-concealment and a complementary one, between autonomy and the –again self-referential– unconcealment of the social-historical institution.

What remains unclear though, is the source wherefrom the project of autonomy derives its normative validity⁹⁸, given that the thinker has

⁹⁷ There are many instances in Castoriadis' *oeuvre* where – in line with one of the major premises of the Enlightenment – religion is not only unambiguously interpreted as a manifestation of prejudice and heteronomy but where a stronger relationship between the two is identified and we are consequently told that "religion and the heteronomous institution of society are of identical essence" (Castoriadis, 1997: 319). It nevertheless seems to this reader that this explicit linkage between the project of autonomy and the demystification of religion is an element which brings Castoriadis' thought particularly close to the positions expressed in Marx's *On the Jewish Question*. The affinity between the two thinkers is especially strong regarding Marx's intention to reverse the tables and to overturn the philosophical attitude by resolving "superstition into history" and the way he subsequently interprets the question concerning the relationship of political emancipation to religion as "the relationship of political emancipation to human emancipation" (Marx, 1843/1974: 217). Let us recall that in Castoriadis' case autonomy and the emancipation from religion are linked with society's recognition of itself *qua instituting agency*, and in this sense it might not be against Castoriadis' spirit if it was argued that "recorded" history exemplifies one major element characterising many of the Greek tragedies, namely the element of misrecognition. Additionally, religious institution always involves the positing, or the substituting, of some "extra-social source" for both the social institution and the magmas of signification, while the theologically or philosophically often postulated "unity of being", religion, and heteronomy are characterised by the thinker in a rare instance where Castoriadis borrows a term from theology – as "consubstantial" (Castoriadis, 1997: 318). Similarly, Marx sees the first step of human emancipation – political emancipation – as emancipation "of the state...from religion in general" (Marx, 1843/1974: 218). The fact that *political emancipation* is for Marx an *imperfect form of human emancipation* (Ibid: 218-220) and that the latter is ultimately conceived in terms of the abolishment of "market relations" (Ibid: 241), i.e. in terms of the abolishment of *capitalism* does not crucially affect the comparison with Castoriadis, since it has to be borne in mind that with the term political emancipation – in the text under consideration – Marx wishes to designate the historical separation between the state and the church and the resultant emergence of civil society in the so-called "west" and not to repudiate the importance of politics conceived as praxis.

⁹⁸ An equally crucial aspect of the problematic status the concept of autonomy occupies in the work of Castoriadis has been rightly indicated by Wagner (2001b: 9) who detects in this Castoriadis' conception the existence of an "ontological gap" between "the sociologically grounded observation of the withering of autonomy and the ever-existent possibility of its emergence". It is furthermore my understanding that Wagner attributes this "gap" to the elective affinities between Castoriadis' own project and the project of the social sciences by and large. This point is quite convincing, especially considering that historically the

persistently undermined the claim to universality of any trans-historical principle (e.g. the alleged universal validity of the so-called principles of reason). In this respect, it is perhaps ironic that the position Castoriadis finds himself in, can be said to be analogous to the one faced by Kant, whose practical philosophy develops from the postulation of an antithesis between autonomy and heteronomy, namely that "the will must will its own will and that its freedom lies in thus being a law to itself" (Caygill, 1995: 89), while the very act of lawgiving must always be independent "of every property belonging to the object of volition" (Kant, 1948: 101).

As already remarked though, in the context of Castoriadis' philosophy pure reason in its critical functioning is no longer given the status of the ultimate tribunal- to invoke Kant's (1787/1929: 601) "judicial" metaphor in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Nor is it conceived as the grounding principle for the possibility of establishing a kingdom of ends, and in this respect⁹⁹ the discrepancy between the two thinkers has to be well acknowledged. Nevertheless, in so far as the conception of a binary opposition between autonomy and heteronomy is concerned, Castoriadis' position seems to be quite close to the Kantian one.

emergence of the social sciences can be theorised in terms of its being in many ways conditioned by autonomy constituting modernity's core signification, while arguably the social sciences were themselves from the very beginning intended as, and they subsequently were seen as standing for, modernity's self-reflexive "moment" (for a more detailed exposition of this issue see Wagner 2001a: 3-4).

⁹⁹ Castoriadis' insistence concerning the alleged "concealment of the social-historical" on Kant's part and his purported "subjectivism" is no minor a difference between the two thinkers either, although it has to be remarked that both Castoriadis' points are open to contestation. It should therefore be borne in mind that the attempt to draw *analogies* between the two thinkers is only valid on the provision that Castoriadis' position is not seen as a simple continuation of the Kantian *problematique*. Instead, I would like to suggest that despite the discontinuities, conflicting elements, and a certain degree of incompatibility between the two philosophies, such a comparison is possible mainly because of Castoriadis' commitment to one of the *major premises of Enlightenment*, namely to the belief in the possibility of human autonomy conceived in terms of a *project*.

This resemblance becomes more apparent especially in the case that the very conception of an autonomous lawgiving of the will is furthermore linked with Kant's celebrated definition of the Enlightenment as "*man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity*" (Kant, 1970: 54); immaturity being primarily conceived in this context in terms of the individual's subjugation to some allegedly "alien" authority¹⁰⁰. Indeed it is possible to suggest following Foucault (1986: 38) that Kant's -brief but crucial- answer to the "audacious" question posed by the *Berlinische Monatschrift*, because of its being "located at the crossroads of critical reflection and reflection on history" can be interpreted as pointing to an attitude¹⁰¹ characteristic of the spirit of the Enlightenment. Paraphrasing Foucault we could say that this "negatively defined" attitude is primarily conceived in terms of an "exit", of a "way out" (*Ausgang*).

It is then precisely this understanding of the project of the Enlightenment as a "way out" and the critical functioning this understanding

¹⁰⁰ That this subjugation to an authority alien to the subject is primarily linked with custom is of considerable importance, since with this move Kant does much more than simply affirming the principle of the necessity of *rupture* with the tradition. Rather, by acknowledging the difficulty involved in an individual's attempt to "work his way out of the immaturity which has become almost *second nature* to him" (Kant, 1970: 54), the thinker pays due respect to the old Aristotelian conception of *ἔξις* (*habit*). It would then follow- although Kant does not pursue the question any further in this text- that *habit* might play a significant part also in the attempt to *liberate* human beings from their self-incurred immaturity. It is furthermore possible to link Kant's understanding of the imposition of "alien" authority with his definition of the heteronomous will, according to which "If the will seeks the law that is to determine it *anywhere else* than in the fitness of its maxims for its own making of universal law...the result is always *heteronomy*" (Kant, 1948: 102). See also Kant's (1787/1929: 603-604) meditations on the education of youth according to the principles of "Critical Pure Reason" and the possibility of their forming a "critical habit" out of this instruction. It is also quite interesting to note that Kant does not compromise his position regarding the need to free the youth -despite the alleged immaturity of their age- from any sort of dogmatic "tutelage", although Kant has to postpone this aim for the future (Ibid: 603).

¹⁰¹ Foucault extends this argument to the point of suggesting that it might be possible for the social sciences to conceive of modernity rather as an "attitude than as a period of history". Since the present work is not concerned with providing a comprehensive framework for the conceptualisation and theorisation of modernity, emphasis is solely placed on whether this attitude identified by Foucault as "a mode of relating to...reality; a voluntary choice made by certain people...a way of thinking and feeling; a way too, of acting and behaving...like what the Greeks called an *ethos*" (Foucault, 1986: 39) can be said to inform not only the Kantian reflections on morality and politics but also Castoriadis' conceptualisation of autonomy as the self-incurred unconcealment of the social-historical.

ascribes to philosophy that can be interpreted as constituting Kant's legacy in the heart of Castoriadis' thought. In spite of propagating the possibility of autonomy and maturity, neither Kant nor Castoriadis fall prey to naïve optimism, since they both hold fast against equating autonomy with the possibility of humanity's attaining a state of historical existence characterised by unequivocal bliss and happiness, or more precisely by the resolution of conflict¹⁰². Kant saw quite clearly that there was no possible way of guaranteeing the harmonic symbiosis between an "ideal" and for this reason perpetually "deferred" kingdom of ends and the kingdom of nature and he consequently attempted to ground the possibility of human freedom on a principle of different order.

Whether his actual choice of principle -i.e. the alleged dignity inherent in human reason and in humanity's resultant ability to give itself laws in conformity with reason¹⁰³ -generates another set of insoluble problems, is a

¹⁰² In this sense, Marx and Engels' (1998: 1) definition of the "history of all hitherto existing society" in the opening paragraphs of their *Communist Manifesto* as "the history of class struggles" can be said to contain a quite important element, namely the identification of some irrevocable linkage between history and struggle or the conception of history as struggle. The consequent postulation by the two thinkers of a concurrent surpassing of alienation and conflict in the "higher phase of communism", the famous anticipation of the "end of prehistory" and the resultant *entry* of humanity "into its true history" is arguably but the "negative" aspect of this identification of history with struggle. It is furthermore ultimately the *hypothetical* resolution of conflict -as it appears primarily in the guise of the struggle between *life* and *death*- that would signify humanity's "emergence" or "deliverance" from what could be called "the realm of *duality*" and that would consequently remove any trace of ambiguity from human action. It has to be remarked that in this respect it makes little difference whether the binary opposition shaping the spectrum of human action is one between "good and evil" or one between "good and bad" to recall Nietzsche's famous distinction.

¹⁰³ Indeed it might be even tenable to interpret Kant's attempt to expel feelings, urges, and in general dispositions of non-purely rational nature from the process that can arguably be described as the bedrock of his moral philosophy, i.e. the process whereby the will formulates its action maxims, in light of his disillusion with the possibility of the attainment of a state of unequivocal happiness. It can be thus said that despite the problems inherent in the Kantian project, and which cannot be discussed in detail here, the philosopher rightly foresaw the impossibility of grounding moral philosophy and legitimate social action on such a precarious principle. The following passage highlights quite clearly the Kantian *problematique* indicated above: "Now a kingdom of ends would actually come into existence through maxims which the categorical imperative prescribes as a rule for all rational beings, if these maxims were universally followed. Yet even if a rational being were himself to follow such a maxim strictly, he cannot count on

quite complex and intricate issue that cannot be answered in the context of this chapter, since any attempt at a response would have to be situated within an evaluation of Kant's philosophical project as a whole and this lies certainly beyond the scope of the present work¹⁰⁴.

Now, Castoriadis' mistrust towards any unqualified optimism is primarily the outcome of his relentless agonising with and against the Marxist conception of history, while it is best exemplified by his severe criticism against what he terms "communism" in its "mythical sense" (Castoriadis, 1997: 110). This is a term coined by the thinker to encompass some distortion of the allegedly unsystematic ideas¹⁰⁵ presented by Marx and Engels mainly in *The German Ideology*, where a break with necessity, the elimination of the division of labour

everybody else to be faithful to it on this ground, nor can he be confident that the kingdom of nature and its purposive order will work in harmony with him, as a fitting member, towards a kingdom of ends made possible by himself-or, in other words, that it will favour his expectation of happiness...And precisely here we encounter the paradox that without any further end or advantage to be attained the mere dignity of humanity, that is, of rational nature in man...should function as an inflexible precept for the will" (Kant, 1948: 100-emphasis added).

¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, one cannot help making a cursory remark regarding the irredeemable split and the inexhaustible conflict postulated by the philosopher between the natural and the rational realms *within* the human "subject".

¹⁰⁵ At bottom it could be argued that Castoriadis is not at ease with a certain remaining in Marx's view of history of a specific interpretation of ideas characteristic of the so-called Jewish-Christian theological tradition, although it has to be remarked that even the compatibility between Christianity and Judaism has been often contested by thinkers having close ties with either of the aforementioned religions. Furthermore, the allegedly "unsystematic" character of Marx's ideas on history is no less a debated issue. Accordingly, Karl Lowith has offered a "strong" reading of Marx's writings, which goes much further than simply tracing unsystematic *messianic* traces in Marx's thought. It is exactly the messianic, *prophetic* aspect of Judaism that *radically* differentiates in Lowith's eyes Judaism and Christianity from Greek philosophy and the ancient mode of *historein*, since it signifies a *shift* of the temporal horizon towards an *eschatological future* that privileges "expectation and hope" (Lowith, 1949:6) This- quite common among modern historians and philosophers- understanding regarding the purportedly radical alteration in the mode historical time is thought and consequently in the way history is enacted informs Lowith's severe criticism against Marx's conception of history in terms of class struggles, which he pronounces to be both unscientific and the exemplification of a "transparent messianism" having "its unconscious root in Marx's own being, even in his race" (Lowith, 1949: 43-44). It is quite important to note that Lowith attributes what he calls Marx's "idealistic materialism" to his being an enlightened, emancipated, "antireligious and even anti-Semitic" Jew and to his perhaps unconscious readiness to transform the "religious righteousness" of the Jews into a secularised conception of history. Furthermore, in this view, the postulation of the "last antagonism between the two hostile camps of bourgeoisie and proletariat" allegedly "corresponds to the Jewish-Christian belief in a final fight between Christ and Antichrist in the last epoch of history", while the

and the 'end of prehistory' are envisaged for humanity and which are evidently related to the problem of revolutionary activity, i.e. of praxis

It seems to this reader that in so far as Marx and Engels' positions are treated solely as inspiring visions¹⁰⁶ and they are consequently not given the status of "scientifically established" and therefore inevitable "laws" guaranteeing the course of historical change, that as far as the outcome of historical action is not prejudiced from the outset, as long as humans do not need the sheltering and the reassurance of "universal" historical laws in order to accept responsibility for their actions, Castoriadis quite readily endorses them, or to be more precise he *appropriates* them in such a manner as to make them compatible with his own conceptual framework.¹⁰⁷ It is thus this mystification that according to Castoriadis those elements have suffered partly in Marx and Engels' thought but mainly in the hands of Marx's *epigone*, which is described as "ill-defined myth", and which primarily entails the "ideological" construction of an image of the communist society to come in which "all resistance, all depth all opaqueness would be absent; a society that would be purely transparent to itself" (Castoriadis, 1987: 111).

very conception on Marx's part of the redemptive and "universal function of the most degraded class" is said to follow "the religious pattern of Cross and Resurrection" (Lowith, 1949: 44).

¹⁰⁶ In this context, "vision" might not convey the exact meaning, but "intention" would be even more inappropriate. It is difficult to say against Marx and Engels' and Castoriadis' intentions that the abolition of classes has an "ideal" status as opposed to the concrete enactment of historical praxis. Marx and Engels' "materialism" is notorious in this respect and occasionally the two thinkers seem quite anxious to establish the "reality" of their revolutionary aspirations, as e.g. when they insist that communism "is not the *state of affairs* which is to be established, an *ideal* to which reality [will] have to adjust itself...[but it is instead] the *real* movement which abolishes the present state of things"(Marx and Engels, 1970: 56).

¹⁰⁷ This is easily recognisable in Castoriadis' contention that there are "numerous elements of undeniable truth in Marx's intuitions concerning the surpassing of alienation: first of all...the necessity of abolishing classes but also the idea of the transformation of institutions to such an extent that a vast difference would indeed separate them from what institutions have represented up to now in history" (Castoriadis, 1987: 111). I think that the acknowledgement on Castoriadis' part of a grave *breach* separating capitalist institutions and the postulated mode of institutions to be established via the enactment of revolutionary *praxis* retains a significant part of Marx's postulations on history, especially when a "radical change in the

Consequently, in a manner consonant with the Marxist distinction between truth and ideology we encounter in the fragment cited above a further elaboration of the motif of society's self-unconcealment, this time in the guise of a loose identification between autonomy and transparency.

This is indeed one of the very few instances where the thinker has to take recourse to the ontological characteristics of the singular human psyche in order to refute the possibility of unequivocal or absolute transparency on the societal level. "No society" insists thus Castoriadis -in an apostrophe that brings his reflections closer to what is commonly called a philosophy of history- "will ever be totally transparent, first because the individuals that make it up will never be transparent to themselves, since there can be no question of eliminating the *unconscious*" (Castoriadis, 1987: 111).

Nevertheless, it is the second, complementary reason given by the thinker regarding the impossibility of pure transparency that can be said to be even more controversial, since it involves the conception of the social as the ground of history and of subjectivity, as that which is "never absent" but which at the same time is never entirely present, "a non-being that is more real than any being, that in which we are wholly immersed yet which we can never apprehend in person" (Ibid: 111). It seems then that in the conceptual framework devised by Castoriadis the institution is the necessary but limited - and occasionally limiting- manifestation of the social, while the latter is understood as inhering in the institution, as the paradoxical creator, preserver, and destroyer of the institution.

mode of existence of human beings" on both the collective and the individual planes, the "limits of which

The very idea of an interplay between concealment and unconcealment¹⁰⁸ provides then Castoriadis with a central conception wherefrom social-historical change can be both articulated and theorised, since history is additionally understood in terms of the social's unfolding in time, enacted as it were via the emergence of the successive- although not mechanically engendered- modes of socio-historical existence attained by the institution.

It is worth noticing that Castoriadis briefly sketches two interrelated but distinctive ways in which the social the historical and the institution are interwoven.

First, the existence of a flat state of affairs that the thinker characterises as "ordinary times" is postulated, which is -in a surprisingly traditional manner- closely linked with the idea of "preservation" and when the "instituted" moment seems to prevail.

are difficult to imagine" is postulated by the thinker (loc. Cit)

¹⁰⁸ One cannot help wondering whether this Castoriadis' conception can be seen as a displacement towards the "social" of the Heideggerian conception regarding the interplay of presence and absence or of concealment and unconcealment characterising the relationship of human beings with Being. Although it is not my intention to trace allegedly Heideggerian influences in Castoriadis' thought, I cannot but refer to Ferry and Renault's argument concerning the alleged influence exerted by Heidegger's thought -via the mediation of the philosophies of Hannah Arendt or the late Merleau-Ponty- on French writers "otherwise as disparate...as Claude Lefort, Cornelius Castoriadis, and Michel Foucault". The authors go on to argue -in a polemic and one-sided manner- that in the case of Lefort the Heideggerian influence is traceable in his "criticism of the totalitarian world as the abolition of the primordial division of the social, and of ideology as a forgetting of the 'split'...[comparable with] Heidegger's reading of metaphysics as the obliteration of difference and otherness". Now, with regard to Castoriadis' work the authors argue that Castoriadis' "denunciation of the Soviet system as a 'stratocracy' that aims, in a new form of imperialism, at 'brute force for the sake of brute force' independent of any reference to an idea" is reminiscent of Heidegger's "criticism of technology as the will to will, as the will to increase force for the sake of force outside of any objective or substantial end" (Ferry & Renault, 1990: 14). In any case, if the thesis of the Heideggerian influence on Castoriadis can be maintained at all I would rather be tempted to trace this in Castoriadis' conception of the self-concealment of the institution rather than in his critique of the Soviet regime as Ferry and Renault suggest. This aspect of Castoriadis' thought seems to me closer to Max Weber's critique of bureaucracy -especially the Soviet type- and instrumental rationality than to Heidegger's critique of technology. Despite this remark, it has to be said that Weber and Heidegger's positions on the issue of science and technology do exemplify considerable similarities, as I attempt to show in the next chapter.

This is complemented- and overturned- by a state of affairs characterised by upheaval, which is then interpreted by the thinker as revolutionary, dynamic, subversive, corresponding to the instituting moment of the social-historical.

It seems then that by committing himself to the conception of the Enlightenment concerning the necessity of rupture with so called "tradition" and the -both theoretically conceived and historically expressed- identification of this rupture with revolution, Castoriadis' thought has also retained the main elements of the Marxist conception of history.

The main difference then regarding the understanding of history and revolutionary praxis between Castoriadis, Marx, and the always controversial- but equally persistent- conception/claim of a Marxist "orthodoxy", is that Castoriadis refuses to compromise the insight that history is the outcome of struggle by circumscribing struggle to some prescribed dynamics of either materialist/Marxian or idealist/Hegelian dialectics, i.e. by ultimately postulating a meaning inherent in history (Castoriadis, 1987: 112).

Castoriadis' struggle against the "ideological" elements of philosophies and theories that in various ways attribute meaning to history contains arguably certain heroic overtones, perhaps as a result of a conception that traces in ideology¹⁰⁹ primarily the human need to flee in the face of finitude with the aid

¹⁰⁹ Evidently a conception of ideology as "distorted" or "false" consciousness has to also account for the reasons that necessitate such a distortion. In the classic Marxian definition ideology is clearly linked with class membership, or in any case with the so-called "material conditions" of human existence and is consequently understood in terms of a *camera obscura*, while its products, the "phantoms formed in the brain" are seen as the products of a "sublimation" of "material" life-processes (see Marx and Engels, 1970:47). With Castoriadis there arguably occurs a complementary shift in emphasis towards a theorising of the links between "ideological" constructions and the fear of the "abyss" experienced by human beings irrespectively of their class-membership, or class-consciousness. The following passage is quite illuminating regarding this shift but also regarding the retaining of the main motif of ideology as distorted consciousness: "This ideology, which cannot accept inherence, finitude, limitation and lack cultivates the scorn for this all too green reality *that it is unable to reach in two ways*: by constructing a *full* fiction and by an indifference with respect to what is and to what one can do with it" (Castoriadis, 1987: 112).

of constructed fictions. Nevertheless, this conception of history as the unpredictable, potentially liberating self-unfolding of the social-historical and the concurrent heroic denunciation of -mechanically conceived- causality and meaning poses a set of problems, which I would like to briefly highlight in concluding the discussion on Castoriadis:

First, there arises the problem concerning the circularity of the conception itself, coupled by the extremely ambivalent ontological status attributed to the *social*. This is furthermore intensified by the occasionally obscure relationship between the postulation of an indeterminate entity that could be called "the social as such" or the essence of the social, and its always-incomplete manifestations, especially as the latter are theorised as being articulated around core significations¹¹⁰.

It remains quite unqualified though, in what sense- and more importantly- up to what extent we could theorise the very process of the formation of distinct socio-historical and cultural formations and the interactions taking place between them in terms of their being articulated around the aforementioned significations.

Arguably, it is much more easier to trace or to postulate in an ad hoc manner the core significations of a specific socio-historical or "cultural" formation that has already displayed some endurance and continuity in time than it would be

¹¹⁰ In defence of Castoriadis though, one could point to the thinker's recurrent insistence that it is *impossible to separate*- "except in the most external way, obliged by the linear nature of discourse- a *space*, a *time* and *that which unfolds*", since according to the thinker the "dimensionality of the social-historical is not a *framework* in which the social-historical is spread out and in which it unfolds... [but this dimensionality is rather] itself the mode of self-unfolding of the social-historical...the *space-time* (the R4) in which we *situate* all reality and social-historical *reality* itself when we posit it as mere exteriority, is itself a product of the social-historical institution and, beyond this, an unending enigma"(Castoriadis, 1987: 219).

to pin down its emergence and the specifics of the *production* of such a formation.

Finally, there is the riddle concerning the relationship between the magma-like nature of significations, the very process of the emergence of allegedly core significations out of this magmatic material and the enactment of "concrete" history both collectively and individually¹¹¹, the main question being whether the emergence of core significations can be given the status of praxis proper, and the consequences this possibility can have on both the conception and the enactment of historical praxis in general and of revolutionary praxis in particular.

¹¹¹ The delineation of the collective dimension of this "unconscious" activity is arguably far more difficult and problematic than its individual/psychical counterpart, especially considering that it is quite unlikely that Castoriadis would be willing to acknowledge any notion of a "collective unconscious" or of an "objective psyche" to recall just the two celebrated definitions given by Karl Jung in his attempts to produce an explanatory framework regarding issues and phenomena of the same order.

2.2 Fate, Resolution, History: Heidegger and the Sphinx.

Εστι δίπουν επί γης καὶ τετράπων, οὐ μίᾳ φωνῇ,
 Καὶ τρίπον' ἀλλάσσει δὲ φύην μόνον ὅσσο' ἐπὶ γαίαν
 Ἐρπετα κινεῖται ἀνὰ τ' αἰθέρα καὶ κατὰ πόντον...
 (The Riddle of the Sphinx)

...Ἀνθρώπων κατέλεξας, ὅς ἦνίκα γαίαν ἐφέρπει,
 πρῶτον ἐφυ τετράπους νηπιὸς ἐκ λαγόνων.
 Γηραιὸς δὲ πέλων τρίτατον πόδα βάκτρον ἐρεῖδει,
 Αὐχένα φορτίζων, γῆρα καμπτόμενος.
 (Oedipus)¹¹²

To Greek mythology and the various appropriations it underwent by the great poets of classical antiquity we owe the handing down of the celebrated riddle cited above, and which was according to myth posed by the Sphinx¹¹³ to anyone travelling to and from Thebes. The encounter with the Sphinx had – almost invariably- fatal consequences for the traveller and consequently the mythical creature was seen as a source of grave financial and political misfortune for the city-state of Thebes. It was Oedipus that according to tradition freed the city from the Sphinx by successfully answering the riddle, to the detriment not only of the mythical creature- which as is well known had to suffer an immediate demise- but also arguably of his own self, since the encounter with the Sphinx marked both his rise and fall.

The way in which these two elements are woven together in the Oedipal myth is quite noticeable, since what can be seen as a manifestation of the former- i.e. Oedipus' reign over the city of Thebes- presupposes the

¹¹² Both extracts are cited from the notes/comments to Sophocles' tragedy *Oedipus Rex* (for the whole text in Greek see Σοφοκλής, 1992: 166).

¹¹³ The Sphinx was depicted as having the head of a woman, a lion's body and wings (see the explanatory notes in Σοφοκλής, 1992: 170-171, n.52)

unbeknownst¹¹⁴ killing of his father and results in the incestuous marriage to his mother. I do not intend to enter into the complex and intricate issues arising from Sophocles' treatment¹¹⁵ of the Oedipal myth in his trilogy¹¹⁶ on the misfortunes of Oedipus, his progenitors and descendants, despite the fact that *Oedipus Rex* served as a starting point for this section, and despite the references to, and the brief discussion of, the *Antigone* in the previous chapter. Such an endeavour would require a thorough knowledge of the Greek culture in general and of tragedy in particular, references to –and assessment of– the historical context where Sophocles' tragedies were conceived and created, and philological specialization that I definitely lack.

I would therefore like to briefly consider- and reflect on- the riddle posed by the Sphinx and Oedipus' answer without exhaustive references to their "original" context, hoping nevertheless that I will refrain from inflicting some sort of "hermeneutic violation" to their intended meaning.

Thus, if we focus on the way in which the riddle is phrased we can arguably trace a certain trickery that renders its being answered in the correct manner almost impossible.

¹¹⁴ Sophocles lays due emphasis on this Oedipus' "blindness" by sharply contrasting him with the renowned blind soothsayer Teresias. There is a beautiful passage in *Oedipus Rex* (verses 416-418), where this contrast is explicitly spelled out in Teresias' response to Oedipus' insults: "Λέγω δ', επειδή καὶ τυφλὸν μ' ὠνειδίσας, σὺ καὶ δέδορκας, κοῦ βλέπεις ἴν' εἰ κακοῦ, οὐδ' ἐνθα ναίεις, οὐδ' ὅτων οἰκεις μέτα". This can be roughly translated "Since you took insult on me for being blind, I tell you that although your vision is unimpaired you do not see the evil you are in, nor where you abide and whom with" (see Σοφοκλῆς, 1992: 80-translation mine). It should be remarked that Oedipus' "blindness" is all the more ironic if one takes into account that by solving the Sphinx's riddle Oedipus established himself as a man of considerable intellectual ability.

¹¹⁵ It is beyond the scope of this chapter to provide an assessment of the impact this myth had on the development of Freudian psychoanalysis either, despite the fact that psychoanalytical terms like "Oedipal complex", "patricide", etc. have acquired an almost "canonical" status in the social sciences and in certain contemporary philosophical schools.

¹¹⁶ The third tragedy Sophocles dedicated to this myth, is of course the celebrated *Oedipus at Colone*, "the last poetising of the last poet in the dawn of the Greek world" as Heidegger ([1943] 1998: 238) famously characterised it. As is evident by Heidegger's reference, *Oedipus at Colone* is considered to be the last of

To be more precise, the use of the verb "to be" in the present tense (ἐστί) gives at first sight the -illusory- impression that the intended entity is described and consequently pointed out by the Sphinx in exclusively synchronic terms.

It is therefore possible that there is a tendency to depict the entity that is described as having "two, three, four, legs and one voice", as displaying all these -combined- qualities at the same time, or at one moment in time. Nevertheless, the use of the verb "to change" in the second verse of the riddle (ἀλλάσσει) partly removes this impression, by adding both a sense of succession in time or diachrony and -in Greek- a sense of duration.

Time is then partly disclosed and partly concealed by the very manner in which the riddle is cast, while its disclosure signifies the concurrent emergence of the "human being"¹¹⁷ as the entity intended by the riddle. Consequently, one significant implication of the way in which the riddle is formulated refers to the acknowledgment of the ambiguous nature of both synchrony and diachrony, especially regarding the way in which those temporal dimensions are arguably interwoven in the case of human beings.

Thus, if we say that human beings 'have' -the present tense being quite important in this context- two, three, and four legs - I purposively refrain from mentioning the "one voice"- and in the same breath we depict time exclusively as an entity external to the human being, an entity against which the various

Sophocles's writings, while the *Antigone* is by contrast considered the oldest (for a brief account of this issue see Βλασσόπουλου, 1993: 19).

¹¹⁷ Although I am not aware of any direct etymological affinity between the word ἄνθρωπος (human being) and the word πούς (leg), in Greek, one cannot but point to a certain conceptual linkage between the two words, since the former literally means the one that is "able to look upwards" and this arguably involves being able to stand on two feet. It is quite interesting to note that the very name Oedi-pus -literally translated as "swollen leg"- exemplifies this linkage in the most direct manner and Sophocles often capitalizes on that in his tragedies.

"instances" of human life are to be measured, then our contention would be only partially correct.

There is always though the possibility of reading the aforementioned riddle as an instance where the problematic nature of past, present, and future is made thematic, where the peculiar relationship between the three "ecstasies" of time—to paraphrase Heidegger—is disclosed and where being-human is actually recognized in a proper manner, viz. as a mystery.

In what way is it then possible to say in a meaningful manner that the three dimensions of time coexist, at least as far as human beings are concerned? Evidently, there is neither a single nor an unequivocal answer to this question and this is arguably why the ancients preserved and transmitted it as a riddle, viz. as something requiring an answer ever anew, and for this reason a very personal one. Heidegger's formulations on temporality and historicity can be therefore seen as one possible attempt at a response to the fundamental question posed by the riddle of the Sphinx, namely the question concerning the meaning of being human, the significance of which would furthermore have to be assessed.

In the first place, it has to be noted that criticisms of Heidegger's treatment of historicity—however justified they may be in other respects—often neglect¹¹⁸ what to this reader seems to be a quite important contention on the

¹¹⁸ It could be argued that Heidegger has significantly contributed to— even reinforced— this interpretation of his philosophy by agreeing "without reservation" with Karl Lowith's suggestion that "his partisanship for National Socialism lay in the essence of his philosophy" and by furthermore attributing his "political engagement" to his "concept of historicity" during the last meeting between the two men in Rome in 1936 (see Lowith, 1994: 59-61). A word of caution is indispensable here: In no way is it argued in the present work—in the manner of Victor Farias for example— that Heidegger's philosophy is Nazi, or even *compatible* with Nazism, although the philosopher's involvement with National Socialism is at the same time undeniable. It seems to this reader that Francois Fédier (1988) has effectively dissociated Heidegger's philosophy from Nazism by showing its incompatibility with the racist and anti-Semitic principles that are essential to the later, although it has to be remarked that Ferry and Renaut (1990: 24-25) rightly accuse

philosopher's part regarding the impossibility of giving an "exhaustive" account of historicity¹⁹. It is this recognition on the philosopher's part that essentially limits the task Heidegger sets to himself in the fifth chapter of the second part of *Being and Time* to the mere indication of "the ontological locus of the problem of historicity" (B&T: 429).

The reader might recall that in the concluding paragraphs of the previous chapter the relationship between temporality and historicity –or more accurately the grounding of the latter on the former– in Heidegger's thought was briefly indicated, although not discussed in detail. It is therefore necessary that the discussion of this quite crucial issue be resumed at this point.

There is in the first place –as Heidegger readily recognizes– a trivial and seemingly "self-evident" manner in which temporality and historicity can be said to belong together, namely the understanding of time as the horizon

Heidegger of not having publicly dissociated himself from an article authored by his wife Elfriede Heidegger-Petri and published in 1935 with the title "On the German Woman". In this article it is argued that it is a "fatal error" to believe "in the equality of all human beings" and disregard the "diversity of peoples and races". Indeed, Heidegger's political involvement seems to be "too complex" as Sartre has commented in his "Critique of Dialectical reason", we could even say it presents us with a real challenge. In response to the challenge Fédier offers a very interesting interpretation concerning Heidegger's characterisation of his political involvement and the rectorship years as a mistake or as the "grosse Dummheit" of his life. Where Heidegger's critics see a light-hearted, irresponsible, and unremorseful attitude on Heidegger's part, Fédier (1988: 236-237) –with recourse to the philosophical employment of the word "Dummheit" in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* in the sense of a "lack of the power of judgement"– is able to detect the confession on Heidegger's of a *philosophical mistake*, which contributed to the *turn* of Heidegger's philosophy. For the sake of "objectivity" though I feel the need to inform the reader that Fédier's defence of Heidegger is often met with suspicion, as does anything associated with the circle of the French "orthodox Heideggerians", i.e. the philosophers close to Jean Beaufret. Ferry and Renault (1990: 6) even call Fédier "Beaufret's student and right-hand man" and accuse the "Beaufret circle" for consciously distorting the 'facts' associated with Heidegger's Nazism and for hindering the access of the public to crucial documents (for a detailed discussion see the first two chapters in Ferry and Renault, 1990).

¹⁹ Heidegger quite emphatically asks his readers –and perhaps also his own self– whether they "still need explicit assurance that the following investigation [on historicity] *does not rest upon a belief that the problem of history is to be solved by a coup de main?*" (B&T: 429- emphasis added). There is of course some ambiguity even regarding this contention, since it might be interpreted as arguing that despite the difficulties the problem of historicity is in principle *solvable*. In any case it seems to this reader that this contention shows that Heidegger was aware that –at least in *Being and Time*– the best he could attempt to come up with was a sort of "groundwork" on the issue, and this despite the somehow "triumphant" tone the philosopher adopts in the book's introduction.

wherein history is both enacted and given meaning (loc. Cit.). Nevertheless, it has to be reminded that in Heidegger's thought "temporality" stands for much more than a simple confirmation of this dimension of time or than a "heroic" confirmation of human finitude"¹²⁰ as it is often interpreted.

Temporality is on the contrary a pivotal concept that is designated by Heidegger as the "ontological meaning" of care, or in other words as the ontological precondition for the concomitant disclosure of Dasein and of the "world" of its concern. Heidegger describes this state of affairs quite vividly in terms of the concomitant springing forth of an "inside" of the human being and of the "there" that is peculiar to Da-sein's being ¹²¹(B&T: 416).

Two issues –equally crucial for Heidegger's understanding of historicity– should nevertheless be clarified regarding this "double" disclosure: The first concerns the phenomenon that Heidegger calls Dasein's spatiality¹²² and which,

¹²⁰ It is true that Heidegger's designation of authentic comportment as being-towards-death renders his project susceptible to an interpretation of temporality as indicative of human finitude. Needless to say that such an understanding of temporality often presupposes an understanding of death –and birth– that runs counter to Heidegger's own intentions as I will attempt to show later in this text. It should be nevertheless remarked at this point that Gadamer rightly suggests that the interpretation of "being from the horizon of time does not mean, *as it is constantly misunderstood to mean*, that Dasein is radically temporal, so that it can no longer be considered as everlasting or eternal", since this would amount to a mere radicalisation of subjectivism. Furthermore, always according to Gadamer, the question of temporality should rather be understood as a transcendence of "the horizon of self-understanding", which "in disclosing time as the *ground* hidden from self-understanding...opens itself to a hitherto *concealed* experience that transcends thinking from the position of subjectivity, an experience that Heidegger calls *being*" (Gadamer, 1989: 99-100).

¹²¹ In my opinion the expressions "inside" and "there" used by Heidegger should not be taken too literally, or at least they should not be interpreted as pointing to an irredeemable ontological split between a "subject" and an "objective" world. Thus the terms must be seen as a "phenomenological" description of the –arguably quite common among humans– experience of an "inside" and of the "extant" alongside it. Besides it is not accidental that the "there" is one component of the very word Dasein, while Heidegger also describes the "inside" as Dasein's being "for the sake of itself" and the "there" as the "in-order-to". In other words, he sees the world of one's concern as a complementary dimension to being for the sake of oneself (see B&T: 416). It has to be noted that a quite significant consequence Heidegger draws from this complementary character of the world and humans has to do with the alleged "*transcendence*" of the world that the philosopher attempts to establish on the assumption that something like a "world" *must be* "already...ecstatically disclosed so that in terms of it entities within-the-world can be encountered" (B&T: 417).

¹²² In his attempt to determine the nature of Dasein's *spatiality* Heidegger juxtaposes the mode of spatiality peculiar to human beings with the spatiality of the extant, or more emphatically of "*real things*". Thus, in

being grounded on the phenomenon of *care*- and hence on Dasein's ecstatico-horizonal temporality¹²³ signifies Dasein's "making room for itself"¹²⁴, or this Situation that the philosopher describes as "self-directive discovery of something like a *region*" (B&T: 420).

The second-and complementary- issue arising out of Heidegger's treatment of temporality refers to the way in which Dasein's potentiality-for-being-a-whole is linked with temporality and care. In what ways -Heidegger asks- is it possible to shed light on the phenomenon of Dasein's "connectedness of life", of the "stretching" between the "extreme" moments of Dasein's "birth and "death"?

Is it in other words both desirable and philosophically valid to understand this phenomenon in terms of Dasein's maintaining some sort of *identity* or *self-sameness* while undergoing a series of experiences "in time"?

Is furthermore the actual legitimately conceived as "in each case, just that Experience which is present-at-hand *in the current now*", while *past* and *future* experiences are conceived as being respectively "no longer" and "not yet" actual (see B&T: 425)?

In line with his earlier discussion concerning the ecstatic character of temporality, Heidegger answers this question in the negative, tracing even in "ordinary" ways of speaking about this "connectedness" a tacit admission that this phenomenon should be traced back to Dasein itself. Again, the existential-

Heidegger's formulation "Dasein does not fill up a bit of space as a Real Thing or item of equipment would, so that the boundaries dividing it from the surrounding space would themselves just define that space spatially. Dasein *takes space in*...In existing it [i.e. Dasein] has already made room for its own leeway" (B&T: 419).

¹²³ Heidegger emphatically asserts "Only on the basis of its ecstatico-horizonal temporality is it possible for Dasein to break into space". It has to be remarked that since spatiality is hereby directly based on temporality and thus ultimately on *care* it is inevitably also linked with *falling*, i.e. with "losing-oneself" in "making-present" and with the related phenomenon of *guilt* (see B&T: 420-421).

ontological phenomenon of *care* serves as Heidegger's point of departure in his attempt to attain deeper insights regarding the issue in question.

Dasein "as *care*" is thus said to *be* this stretching "between" death and birth, while neither the former nor the latter should be understood as "actual" moments or "points" in "time". A glimpse of this alternative, and allegedly "non-objectifying" mode of being the thinker attempts to ascribe to birth and death, could arguably be attained only with reference to Dasein's own existence. Since, Heidegger contends, Dasein always "exists as born and, as born, it is already dying, in the sense of Being-towards-death", then the specific movement that could be rightly attributed to human existence -in being distinguished from the movement peculiar to the present-at-hand- is that of Dasein's historizing (B&T: 426-427).

It is imperative to pay due attention to the fact that behind this interpretative shift given to birth and death by the thinker lies the intention of giving a definite answer regarding the locus of the "problem of history", which, Heidegger insists, has with this move "already been decided" (B&T: 427). Accordingly, and in conformity with the distinction between the ontic and the ontological levels of enquiry, Heidegger wishes to move beyond the epistemic concerns about- or even the epistemological¹²⁵ theorizations of- history in an

¹²⁴ It is quite important to note that for Heidegger "making room for oneself is a directional awaiting of a region, and as such it is equiprimordially a bringing-close (de-severing) of the ready-to-hand [i.e. of the equipment] and present-at-hand [i.e. of the disclosed extant]" (B&T: 420).

¹²⁵ Accordingly, Heidegger insists that if history is "treated in accordance with a theory of science, not only aiming at the *epistemological* clarification of the historiological way of grasping things (Simmel) or at the logic with which the concepts of historiological presentation are formed (Rickert), but doing so with an orientation towards the *side of the object*, then, as long as the question is formulated this way, history becomes in principle accessible only as the *Object* of a science...[and] the basic phenomenon of history...has been irretrievably put aside" (B&T: 427).

attempt to uncover¹²⁶ the "primordially historical" in the guise of Dasein's historicity (B&T: 428).

Once more the distinction between authenticity and inauthenticity shapes two distinct modes of historicity, and in accordance with the way in which "historicity is rooted in *care*", Dasein is said to exist as "authentically or inauthentically historical" (B&T: 428).

Despite the seemingly rigid –and for some even ideological– character of the distinction, it has to be reminded that Heidegger was careful not to identify "inauthentic existence" with "apparent or ungenuine existence". Moreover, inauthenticity is said to belong to the "essential nature of Dasein", while authenticity is conceived in terms of "a modification but not a total obliteration of inauthenticity¹²⁷" (B&T: 171).

This becomes even plainer when the philosopher explicitly links inauthentic historical comportment with the very phenomenon of everydayness¹²⁸ as the

¹²⁶ This "uncovering" is deemed necessary since, for Heidegger, the "existential-ontological constitution of historicity has been covered up by the way Dasein's history is ordinarily interpreted", while the task Heidegger sets for himself is the recovery of this primordial dimension "*in spite of all this*". It is furthermore quite important to note that Heidegger attempts to ground the *possibility* of this uncovering on the assumption that "disclosing and interpreting belong essentially to Dasein's historicizing" (see B&T: 428).

¹²⁷ Gadamer rightly suggests that the common root of authenticity and inauthenticity does not merely indicate "that 'fallenness' is as much 'part of human life as 'resoluteness', sin (unbelief) just as much as belief". For Gadamer, this common origin rather points to the "first form in which, in Heidegger's thought, being itself has come into language as the antithesis of 'disclosure' and 'concealment'" (T&M: 526). In his essay entitled "Heidegger and Marburg Theology", Gadamer expresses this insight more specifically by contrasting Heidegger's conception of the antithesis between authenticity and inauthenticity with Husserl's concept of "anonymous intentionality". In Gadamer's view the Husserlian "constitutional analysis of the anonymous 'accomplishments' of transcendental consciousness proceeded from the unrestricted universality of reason", which is conceived as able to clarify "every thing intended in constitutional analysis". This means that "things" can in principle be made "objects of an explicit act of intending", in other words they can be *objectified* albeit in a different manner than things are objectified by the scientific, instrumental reason. In contrast to "this [i.e. the phenomenological] objectification" Heidegger is seen as having pursued "another direction", namely the inquiry into the indissoluble "interinvolvement between authenticity and inauthenticity, of truth and error, and the concealment that is essential to and accompanies every disclosure and that intrinsically contradicts the idea of total objectifiability" (Gadamer, 1964/1977: 202-203).

¹²⁸ Although Heidegger acknowledges traces of "caledrical" significations in the very concept of "everydayness" he nevertheless wishes to designate with this concept "a way to be" or "a definite *how* of

"horizon that is closest to us", or even when he acknowledges some -limited indeed- validity in the common-sense understanding of temporality that sees Dasein as temporal "in the sense of [its] being *in time*" (B&T 428-429).

Heidegger nevertheless wishes to refute this latter interpretation on the grounds that it would entail the conceptualisation of human beings in terms of the "present-at-hand", i.e. as entities that enter into the flow of time. His strategy consists in *first* detecting a "privileging" of the "past" in the significations arising from common sense uses of the word "history" and in subsequently putting into question the way in which this "past" is thereby interpreted (B&T: 430-431).

Crucially, this deconstructive practice revolves around an investigation into the "paradoxical" mode of being of so-called "antiquities", with emphasis placed on those preserved and displayed in museums. Indeed, if with the word "past" one wishes to describe something "irretrievably" belonging to some "earlier time", and if at the same time the past is seen as the dimension proper of history, then it is difficult to see what makes these "antiquities" historical, since they are still "present-at-hand", i.e. subject to time, while the world they represent "no longer is".

Thus, the historical qualities, which these "things" allegedly display, cannot be derived simply by their being inserted in -and most probably worn out by- the course of time, or -what amounts to the same thing- this trivial dimension of temporality does not in itself invest objects with "historical

existence by which Dasein is dominated through and through for life". The "everyday" is furthermore often described by the philosopher with the terms "proximally and for the most part", while it is strongly linked with the public, since it is said that the "publicly manifest" belongs to everydayness. It has to be said though, that for Heidegger everydayness holds sway over human beings, since it is "determinative for Dasein *even when it has chosen the they for its hero*", while even *in the moment of vision* "indeed, and often just *for that moment*, existence can even gain the mastery over the *everyday*; but it can *never extinguish it*" (B&T: 422- emphasis added).

significance". It is instead, their serving as "equipment", or better their being part of a human "world" in the wider sense that gives household gear, sculptures, temples etc their historical character (B&T: 432).

Having thus constructed his argument, Heidegger ventures to establish Dasein as the primarily historical being, while tracing the reason behind the privileging of the past¹²⁹ in everyday conceptions of history in the very orientation towards the secondarily historical, viz. historical "things" and even "Nature" as the *"very soil of history"* (B&T: 433). If this "covering up" of the *primarily historical* character of Dasein is the precondition of what can be called "inauthentic" historical comportment, Heidegger traces authentic historicity in the phenomenon of anticipatory resoluteness and in the authentic "anticipation of death" the latter allegedly entails (B&T: 435).

Dasein's authentic or "primordial" historizing is furthermore "designated" by the philosopher in a positive manner in terms of Dasein's handing itself down to itself, "free for death, in a possibility which it has *inherited* and yet has *chosen*" (Loc.cit). One cannot fail to detect in this passage both the philosopher's dissatisfaction with "cyclical" and "linear" conceptions of historical time, and his attempt to elevate thought beyond the realm of a mere juxtaposition between "tradition" and historical "novelty". As already indicated

¹²⁹ The *enigma* Heidegger aspires to solve can be formulated in the following manner: If what makes history possible is the disclosure of a "world" on Dasein's part, and if this disclosure is ultimately grounded on temporality, how can we explain the privileging of only *one* of the three *equiprimordial ecstatic* dimensions, viz. of the past, that characterises the common sense understanding of history? Heidegger thinks that this apparent paradox can be solved with reference to the "secondarily historical", and furthermore suggests that it is possible to show that "the ordinary conception of *world history* arises precisely from our orientation to what is thus secondarily historical". It seems to this reader that the philosopher furthermore suggests that this "ordinary" attitude has in turn grave consequences for the way in which the science of historiography "receives" its subject matter. This interpretation might be sustained in view of the philosopher's contention that so-called "world historical" entities "do not first get their historical character...by reason of an historiological Objectification; they get it rather *as those entities* which they are in themselves when they are encountered within-the-world"(B&T: 433).

by the long citation from *Being and Time* with which the previous chapter was concluded. Heidegger's conception of authentic historicity entails a quite significant interpretative shift regarding the very notions of fate and repetition. In contradistinction with ordinary conceptions of *fate* that use this word in order to signify the unavoidable impact of the workings of "alien" powers on human beings, Heidegger wishes to interpret it as "a mode of being" that is possible, attainable, and most importantly desirable for Dasein, on the provision that "death, guilt, conscience, freedom, and finitude reside together equiprimordially in the Being of an entity as they do in care" (B&T: 437). Heidegger's –seemingly paradoxical– contention¹³⁰ that irresolute Dasein "has no fate" and that it therefore suffers a kind of "degraded" historical experience, might entice the reader to suggest that the philosopher's conception of authentic historicity exemplifies strong decisionist elements.

It nevertheless still seems quite plausible to interpret Heidegger's introduction of the distinction between fate and destiny as an attempt to rule out subjectivism and decisionism, since the former, by being ontologically grounded on care refers to mainly the subjective aspect of "authentic historicity", while the latter is derived by the equiprimordial phenomenon of Being-with-others¹³¹ and is therefore conceived as being determined by Dasein's co-historicity.

¹³⁰ Macquarrie and Robinson, the translators of *Being and Time*, note that the English speaking reader would be perhaps "less troubled if [s]he were to read that the irresolute Dasein has no *destiny*". They furthermore assert "Heidegger has chosen to differentiate sharply between the words *Schicksal* and *Geschick*, which are ordinarily synonyms. Thus *Schicksal* (our *fate*) might be described as the *destiny* of the resolute individual; *Geschick* (our *destiny*) is rather the *destiny* of a larger group, or of Dasein as a member of such a group" (B&T: 436, n.1).

¹³¹ It is quite important to note that Heidegger designates co-historicity as "the historizing of a community, of a people", while Dasein's "fateful destiny in and with its *generation*" is conceived as making up "the full authentic historizing of Dasein" (B&T: 436). Now, although the categories of "community", of "a people" and of "generation" are seemingly derived from the equiprimordial –although trivial– situation of Being-

Thus, it can be said of the Heideggerian employment of fate that it discloses the indispensability of praxis, theorized from the point of view of the "individual" human being. Destiny then arguably re-introduces a level of collective determination, since it is not used in order to signify a mere aggregate of "individual fates", but it rather makes manifest that "our fates have already been guided in advance, in our Being with one another in the same world and in our resoluteness for definite possibilities" (B&T: 436).

This is coupled by the philosopher's attempt to break with an understanding of repetition that would unequivocally address this phenomenon in terms of either the re-emergence, or what could be termed the "venerating preservation", or even more the recurrence of a reified past.

By contrast, repetition is seen as an explicit handing down of inheritance, as the act of "going back" and give new meanings and content into "the possibilities of the Dasein that has-been-there".

Repetition is therefore said to be a "*reciprocative rejoinder*" to the possibility of "that existence which has been-there", and which, because being made possible in a resolution taking place in a moment of vision, should at the same time be seen as "a *disavowal* of that which in the *today*, is working itself out as the *past*" (B&T: 438).

with-one-another, Heidegger does not succeed in providing a rigorous conception –or even an adequate definition- of them, and consequently the boundaries between those categories remain blurred, while the categories themselves are "mystified". It should be made clear that I do not hereby evoke the indispensability or the purported "superiority" of a "scientific" –sociological or otherwise- clarification of the aforementioned concepts over some allegedly "naïve" philosophical conceptions of them, since –as I attempted to show with regard mainly to Castoriadis and occasionally to Marx and Adorno- it is doubtful whether the very conception of "the social", even- and perhaps especially- when it is theorised over against the "communal", is any less problematic or unambiguous.

Having thus discredited ordinary conceptions of time and history, Heidegger—in conformity with his understanding of authentic comportment¹³²—attempts to ground authentic repetition as the mode proper of authentic historicity on the ecstasy of time usually less associated with history, namely on the *future*. We can perhaps better explore the region Heidegger wishes to disclose with this move by juxtaposing inauthentic to authentic repetition. After all, it is precisely this inauthentic way of concerning oneself with one's history that in Heidegger's view makes the question concerning the connectedness of Dasein possible. In other words, it is only the disparity and the mutability of one's lifetime experiences that render the belief in a persistent and consistent "self" rather problematic.

The issue of Dasein's connectedness seems of great importance to this reader, since by pointing to the multiplicity of manners in which the "self" is continually dispersed and fragmented in the various affairs of Das Man and in the "world historical" it also reveals Dasein's occasional—but no less important—attempt to attain self-constancy in anticipatory resoluteness¹³³. It is no accident that Heidegger in identifying resoluteness as the source of—the existentiell—self-constancy and of freedom¹³⁴ attempts to define it in non-

¹³² In Heidegger's formulation then, authentic Being-towards death provides also the ground for the authentic enactment and experiencing of history: "*Authentic Being-towards-death- that is to say, the finitude of temporality- is the hidden basis of Dasein's historicity*". Dasein does not first become historical in repetition; but because it is historical as temporal, it can take itself over in its history by repeating". It is furthermore important to note that this mode of repetition is given a primordial or originary status and this is why the philosopher insists that for repetition to take place "*no historiography is as yet needed*" (B&T: 438-emphasis added).

¹³³ I think it is quite important to cite Heidegger's exact formulation: "it [i.e. the question concerning Dasein's connectedness as it arises from inauthentic existence] asks rather in which of its own kinds of Being Dasein *loses itself* in such a manner that it must, as it were, only subsequently pull itself together out of dispersal, and think up for itself a unity in which that together is embraced" (B&T: 442).

¹³⁴ Heidegger's exposition of resoluteness allows for two complementary conceptions of freedom to emerge. First, freedom is conceived in a "negative" manner as 'freedom from' the "they", and in this sense Dasein can be seen as recovering itself from its "lost-ness" in the "they" and as thereby freeing itself from

temporal terms¹³⁵, so as to make it conceivable for it to contain "every possible moment of vision that may arise from it" (B&T: 443).

This entails that the constancy of the self is not interrupted by the moment of vision, since it is not formed of "moments" adjoined together in an external manner, but rather formed in the basis of a temporality "which has *already been stretched along*" (Loc. Cit). By contrast, in the case of inauthentic existence, the very concealment of authentic temporality's stretching entails the prevailing of the actual over the possible- expressed also but not exclusively in terms of an unquestioned conformity with established views on the world- historical, and the inevitable interpretation of the "past" from the horizon of a reified present.

In a quite remarkable apostrophe of the text- that could be furthermore interpreted as a critical remark against the unequivocal identification of modernity with rupture and progress¹³⁶- the philosopher ascribes the preoccupation with the "modern" to inauthentic historicity, while attributing to *authentic historicity* an understanding of history in terms of "a recurrence of the possible", grounded on Dasein's openness (B&T: 444).

the illusions and their way of being in general, and this is why Heidegger contends that resoluteness "constitutes the *loyalty* of existence to its own Self". Secondly, freedom is positively conceived as 'freedom of choice' among the possibilities that are presented -and therefore available-to oneself, while it follows that this entails a sort of "sacrifice" or a "giving up" of other possibilities available to oneself, "in accordance with the demands of some possible Situation or another" (B&T: 443).

¹³⁵ It is thus said of resoluteness that it would be "misunderstood ontologically if we were to suppose that it *would be actual as Experience* only as long as the *act of resolving lasts*" (B&T: 443).

¹³⁶ For the identification of modernity with rupture the following passage from Wagner (2001: 80) is quite illuminating: "The occurrence of modernity assumes a rupture in time, the effect of which is to produce both modernity and its antecedent counterpart: tradition...Since modernity however exists in and through opposition to tradition, the question of the relation to tradition remains part of the discourse of modernity...Unlike modernists tend to think, this latter discourse does not wither away with modernity taking its course".

This shift of emphasis from the actual to the possible is not confined to the enactment and understanding of authentic historicality; it is instead significantly extended so as to encapsulate historical science.

There is certainly nothing scandalous in the phenomenological contention that in order for a specifically "scientific" thematizing to occur, the realm of the intended entities must have been disclosed beforehand in pre-scientific a manner. There are nevertheless some novel elements in Heidegger's attempt to go beyond the postulation of a "lifeworld" or the mere advocating of a difference in the methodologies of the natural and the historical or "humane" sciences in accordance with the purportedly incompatible nature of their subject matters.

If –in postponing the question concerning the possibility of a "history of the present"- one assigns to the historical sciences the task of disclosing the "past", then this past should be in principle "accessible", the *"way to it"* must in general be *open*" (B&T: 445). Since the very "accessibility of the past"¹³⁷ is a problem that cannot be solved with recourse to the persistence in time of "historical entities" like monuments and "remains" or even to the "recovery" of historical "traces" and "facts", Heidegger turns –somewhat predictably- his gaze to Dasein as what is "primarily historical", for an explanation of this phenomenon.

Historiology being therefore conceived as grounded on Dasein's historicity, it is furthermore said to authentically temporalize itself *"in terms of*

¹³⁷ The term is borrowed from Wagner (2001: 80 ff), while its use in this context is confined at the indication of the problematic ontological status of the "past", since a thorough elaboration of the issue will only be undertaken with reference to the discussion of Gadamer's notion of the *fusion of horizons* in the next chapter.

the future"¹³⁸, while the subject matter *proper* to it is sought in the disclosure of the possibilities of the existence which has been "there" (B&T: 446-447).

That Heidegger aims at much more than offering the theoretical justification for the manipulation of historical "facts" or for subjecting historical "truth" to whimsical interpretations is patent in his contention that the authentic historiological disclosure of the past is beyond the common conceptions of "subjectivity" and "objectivity", his critical remarks on history as a recreation of an era's "world-view" and his rejection of historicism as a mode of historiology that allegedly alienates Dasein from its authentic historicity (B&T: 448).

What he is then in search of, is -what I would allow myself the liberty of calling- the "over-objectivity" attained by the authentic disclosedness of historical experience, which according to the thinker even makes possible what Nietzsche -in the second of his "untimely meditations" calls the use and abuse of history for life¹³⁹.

Indeed, Heidegger attempts to provide us with a view of historiology that sees its *threefold* character prefigured in Nietzsche's distinction regarding the ways-monumental, antiquarian, and critical- in which history "belongs" to

¹³⁸ Nietzsche's influence is arguably quite strong in this Heidegger's formulation as the following passage suggests: "...history is written by the experienced and superior man...The past always speaks as an oracle: *Only as master builders of the future who know the present will you understand it...* now it is proper to know that only the builder of the future has a right to judge the past...*Form an image for yourselves to which the future ought to correspond and forget the superstition that you are epigoni*" (Nietzsche, 1980: 38- emphasis added).

¹³⁹ Although in the chapters on historicity Nietzsche's influence on Heidegger is patent even in the manner in which certain terms are coined (e.g. "the recurrence of the possible" being most certainly an interpretation of Nietzsche's "*eternal recurrence*", as the latter is developed in e.g. aphorisms 55 and 1053-1067 in Nietzsche, 1968: 35-36 and 544 ff.), it is still quite doubtful whether the concept of life is employed in the same fashion by the two thinkers. At times it seems that with the employment of the term "life" Heidegger moves more into the direction of Dilthey and has in mind more a "generic differentiation between the ontical and the historical" that is furthermore conceived as the fundamental task of "*the philosophy of life*" (B&T: 455). This is not to suggest that Nietzsche's employment lacks this "historical", or even "aesthetic"- not in the Kantian sense- dimension; I am just sceptical about the extent to which Heidegger would like to follow the biological connotations of Nietzsche's employment of the term, such as the references to "inner constructive" drives (see e.g. Nietzsche, 1980: 39).

humans¹⁴⁰. In a surprisingly "fast" discussion of these three kinds of history the claim is made that the allegedly omitted –by Nietzsche– proof of their necessity or the grounding of their unity is to be recovered with reference to authentic historicity and temporality.

Despite the impression the reader might get that Heidegger's schematic presentation of the aforementioned unity lacks the powerful narration, the suffering, and hence the paradoxical qualities of Nietzsche's "meditation", it still presents us with a fruitful imagery concerning historicity and historiology, where Nietzsche's distinction between "use" and "abuse" is silently replaced by the contrast between the "authentic" and the "inauthentic".

Thus, in Heidegger's interpretation, so far as Dasein "resolutely discloses" the "past" possibility it has chosen¹⁴¹ and enacts it in authentic repetition, it is considered to be "open for the *monumental* possibilities¹⁴² of human existence", while the kind of historiology stemming from this attitude is also said to be *monumental* (B&T: 448).

¹⁴⁰ In Nietzsche's (1980: 14- emphasis added) formulation history is said to belong "to the living man in three respects: it belongs to him so far as he is active and striving, so far as he preserves and admires, and so far as he suffers and is in need of liberation. To this triplicity of relations correspond three kinds of history: *so far as they can be distinguished, a monumental, an antiquarian, and a critical* kind of history". It is important to note that Heidegger's treatment of the three kinds of history as a "triad" (see B&T: 448) is "prefigured" in the passage cited above.

¹⁴¹ Heidegger often refers to Dasein *choosing its hero* both regarding authentic and inauthentic historicity, while grounding Dasein's authentic exemplification of this "ability" on *anticipatory resoluteness*. In other words it can be said that Dasein is conceived as "recognising" certain *possibilities* in the very being of its "hero", which furthermore it resolves to *re-enact* on a different plane. It is quite difficult to decide whether this conception should be conceived as a gross simplification of human psychology or as an ingenious *appropriation* of Nietzsche's conception concerning the alleged disparity in the way life is "endured" or "celebrated" and history is enacted between "weak" and "strong" individuals, Hegel's notion of "great individuals" and their role in the unfolding of the "spirit", or even Dostoevski's ambiguous depiction of the role of "great men" in the unfolding of world-history in his *Crime and Punishment*. In any case it attempts to grasp an elusive state of affairs, while arguably exemplifying the qualities attributed by Caygill to Hegel's meditations on world-history: it is both "brutal and subtle" (Caygill, 1999: 4).

¹⁴² It has to be remarked that for Heidegger possibility ranks explicitly higher than actuality; thus it is argued that phenomenology can be understood "by seizing upon it as a possibility" (B&T: 63). Arguably then, Heidegger's own attempt to open a new path for phenomenology in *Being and Time* and his later

Similarly, since even authentic repetition requires an admiration for possibilities past, authentic antiquarian historiology is adumbrated in the authentically monumental, while when historiology combines those two qualities it is seen as "necessarily a critique of the *Present*", and hence as critical (B&T: 449). Thus in an attempt to ascertain a grasp of the historical that reaches well beyond the ontic realm of entities, Heidegger concludes the chapter on historicity by "putting in practice" his argument concerning the authentic historicity of the historian who only "edits" sources¹⁴³.

Consequently the announced discussion on Dilthey and Count Yorck acquires primarily the character of an "editing" of passages from Count Yorck's letters to Dilthey, with the plain intention to establish:

First, that the question of historicity is of an ontological nature, secondly, that the question concerning the ontical is again an ontological one and that thirdly, the ontical being one domain "of entities other than Dasein" the "idea of Being" must embrace both the ontical and the historical.

This last consequence is of crucial importance since by stating the necessity of a "generic differentiation" of the "idea of Being" it reaffirms the primacy of the question concerning the meaning of being right in this section of the book where it seemed to be mostly losing in relevance (B&T: 455).

Thus, the announced "destruction" of traditional ontology receives a new formulation in this furthering of the ontological question through the

attempts to recover an over-conceptual attunement with being in the thought of the pre-Socratics can be seen as vivid examples of the way the philosopher understood –and enacted– authentic historicity.

¹⁴³ Heidegger uses the following example in order to illustrate the manner in which authentic historiology might be enacted: "If the historian *throws* himself straightway into the *world-view* of an era, he has not thus proved as yet that he understands his object in an authentically historical way and not just *aesthetically*. And on the other hand, the existence of a historian who *only* edits sources, may be characterised by a historicity which is authentic" (B&T: 448).

juxtaposition between the "ontic" and the "historical" of which the ages remained purportedly ignorant.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter it was attempted to juxtapose Castoriadis and Heidegger's conceptions of history with emphasis on their critiques of the traditional or inherited conceptions of time and history. An analogy was traced between the role of the couplet of authenticity and inauthenticity in the shaping of Heidegger's theorisation of historical praxis and the function of the antithesis between autonomy and heteronomy in Castoriadis' conception of historical creation. The positions of the two thinkers were presented somewhat separately and the two accounts were not brought explicitly together for two important reasons. The first stems from the epistemological position favouring 'mapping' as a mode of presentation that allows for conceptual 'spaces' to emerge more adequately than 'traditional' and 'rationalistic' modes of presentation. The second -and equally important- reason concerns my determination to maintain the difference between the two accounts. This latter reason becomes ever more important in light of the fact that the analogy between authenticity/inauthenticity and autonomy/heteronomy can be easily misconstrued as the postulation of an identity between the two. It is thus important to maintain the difference between Heidegger's conception of the 'collective' and Castoriadis' conception of the social-historical. Although in both thinkers all known social-historical formations can be characterised as primarily inauthentic (in the case of Heidegger) or heteronomous (in the case of

Castoriadis), there is still a huge difference in emphasis between them than needs to be acknowledged. Thus, in the case of Castoriadis and in line with the Marxist tradition historical praxis is primarily addressed from the perspective of the social historical, while even autonomy is conceived in terms of a self-recognition of the social historical qua instituting agency. It is in my mind impossible to conceive the 'collective' in Heidegger in similar terms, and this despite the fact that an authentic mode of collective historical enactment is implied in Heidegger's formulations. I have thus tried to show that Heidegger's account on historicity is premised on the singular human 'being's capacity for inauthentic and authentic comportment. Furthermore, by juxtaposing the two accounts I attempted to temporarily create a tension between a conception of history based on radical novelty and a conception based on authentic repetition. It is this tension, as well as the one between 'concrete' history and 'historicity' that is brought under closer scrutiny in the next chapter with the discussion of Gadamer's oeuvre. Finally, it was shown that for both Castoriadis and Heidegger the mode of being of the human and therefore 'historical' is radically different than that of the 'natural' realm. This crucial insight shared by the two thinkers duly provides the ground for the first part of the next chapter, where Gadamer's understanding of the historical consciousness and truth is discussed over against the claims of scientific instrumental reason.

Chapter Three

The problem of Historical Consciousness & the Universality of Hermeneutics

Introductory remarks

In this chapter the interrelationship between meaning and historicity is explored from the perspective opened up by Gadamer's elaborations on the phenomenon of the effective historical consciousness and his general attempt at the formulation of a universal hermeneutics. In the beginning of the chapter Gadamer's project of a hermeneutic philosophy is discussed in close relation to Heidegger's understanding of truth as disclosure already presented in chapter one and in juxtaposition to prevalent epistemological conceptions of truth. It is argued that in opposition to the claims of modern epistemology and scientific reason the phenomenon of history is made accessible in a more primordial manner in the very act of the hermeneutic appropriation of the understanding. Since Gadamer's views have often been interpreted from the vantage point of modern epistemology, a non-reductive interpretation of his positions would have to start with an attempt to wrest his thought from the claims of the aforementioned interpretative frameworks. This is achieved by situating Gadamer in the wider context of humanistic thought –spanning from Plato and Aristotle to German Idealism, Phenomenology and Critical Theory- and showing how his conceptions of truth, meaning and historicity are irreducible to scientific and epistemological concerns.

3.1 Truth Or Method? The Ambivalent Origins of Gadamer's Ontology

Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, viz. his attempt at providing a universal application of the hermeneutic claim to *truth* has often raised critical objections, mainly on the grounds that it allegedly reinforces an ill-conceived epistemological distinction between the natural and the social or -humane- sciences. Significantly, this objection has been raised both¹⁴⁴ from within the hermeneutic camp, and from the current "representatives" of *Critical Theory*, while it triggered critical responses in the Anglo-Saxon tradition by proponents of *Realism*.

Specific instances of this latter current, exemplify an affinity with the positions expressed by Critical Theory's assessment of Gadamer's hermeneutics, since it combines elements of Habermas's critique of Gadamer with the epistemological principles of *Critical Realism*. Despite the indisputable merits¹⁴⁵ of this approach, it can be also criticised on the grounds that it

¹⁴⁴ Habermas' (1986: 134) contention that Gadamer gives "the interpretive mode of *Verstehen* a peculiarly one-sided twist", by allegedly remaining "bound to the experience of the philologist who deals with classical texts" (loc.cit), appears at first glance as being in fundamental opposition to Ricoeur's (1981: 68) view that Gadamer overlooks the importance of the "text and exegesis" in favour of the dimension of "history and historicity". Nevertheless, since Ricoeur understands this alleged precedence of the historical as an act of unacknowledged "fidelity to Dilthey" on Gadamer's part, it can be argued that both criticisms mentioned above re-inscribe Gadamer's hermeneutics to either a "methodical" or a "methodological" plane, form which it strived to escape. It has to be noted though, that in contradistinction to Habermas who in his *Theory of Communicative Action* discusses Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics as a specific instance of "understanding meaning" in the social sciences, Ricoeur rightly acknowledges Gadamer's attempt at universalising (or de-regionalising) the hermeneutic claim but feels that Gadamer's project somehow remains bound to both the Romantic tradition and to the fallacious distinction between *understanding* and *explanation* as distinct –and ultimately mutually exclusive– modes of knowledge.

¹⁴⁵ Hence, while recognising the universal scope of Gadamer's hermeneutics, and while dissociating it from merely methodological concerns Outhwaite (1987:67) paradoxically concludes in stressing the similarities between Habermas and Gadamer and seeing an allegedly anti-naturalist attitude as providing the starting point for both philosophical enterprises. It furthermore seems to me that Gadamer's assertion that the existence of the "thing in itself" distinguishes the natural from the human sciences, should not be understood as denying the existence of a "historical event *in itself*" as Outhwaite (1987: 66) seems to suggest, but should rather be interpreted as postulating a degree of *proximity with* the historical that does not apply to the human being's relationship with the realm of "nature". It follows that if Gadamer can be

redoubles its distance from Gadamer's project, which it ultimately interprets from the perspective of Bhaskar's comparatively recent revival of the positivist ideal concerning the possibility of *naturalism*¹⁴⁶.

To no avail has Gadamer stressed time and time again¹⁴⁷ that his version of hermeneutics as it is mainly articulated in his major work *Truth and Method*¹⁴⁸, should be understood neither as an intervention in methodological debates, nor as a revival of the nineteenth century *Methodenstreit*, but rather as a radicalisation of Heidegger's unveiling of the "*hermeneutics of facticity*", a

accused of reproducing a dualistic conception of nature and history, this has to be traced on a different plane than the one indicated by the aforementioned author.

¹⁴⁶ Although the term has a long history and quite a few meanings attached to it, in this context it primarily denotes the acceptance of the positivist principle on the *unity* of method between the natural and the human or social sciences. According to the positivist vision of science mathematical physics should provide the ideal for the development of all branches of science, which in some versions of logical positivism is seen as a *unity* for the additional reason that all empirical statements "can be expressed in a single language. [while] all states of affairs are of one kind and are known by the same method" (Carnap, 1934: 32). The contemporary, "epistemological" significations of the term, which has been introduced in epistemology by Quine (Audi, 1995: 518-519) are quite alien to the meaning given to it by Kant (1787/1929) in his scandalously brief –or "cursory" as the philosopher himself opted to put it (Ibid: 667)– "history of pure reason", i.e. of metaphysics. Kant (Ibid: 668) distinguishes there between naturalist and scientific methods prevailing in the field of enquiry he has previously inscribed to the jurisprudence of pure reason. Importantly then in contradistinction with the contemporary epistemological connotations, Kant depicts somewhat derogatorily the "*naturalist* of pure reason" as adopting as "his principle that though common reason, without science, that is, through what he calls sound reason, he is able in regard to those most sublime questions which form the problem of metaphysics, to achieve more than is possible through speculation" (loc. cit).

¹⁴⁷ See Gadamer's explicit statement that the hermeneutics developed in *Truth and Method* "is not therefore a methodology of the human sciences, but an attempt to understand what the human sciences truly are, beyond their methodological self-consciousness, and what connects them with the totality of our experience of world" (Gadamer, 1989: xxiii- hereafter referred to as T&M). Equally enlightening is his contention that he "did not wish to elaborate a system of rules, to describe, let alone direct, the methodical procedure of the human sciences", or to "revive the ancient dispute on method between the natural and the human sciences" (T&M: xxviii, xxix).

¹⁴⁸ Ricoeur rightly highlights the concealed *disjunctive* dimension of the title, which in his view "confronts the Heideggerian concept of truth with the Diltheyan concept of method" and wonders to what extent the work "deserves to be called *Truth AND Method*, and whether it ought not instead to be entitled *Truth OR Method*". Ricoeur makes this provocative proposal since he sees *Truth and Method* as a whole mirroring this conflict between Heidegger's fundamental ontology and the epistemological *problématique* posed by Dilthey. What is more, if Heidegger "was able to elude the debate with the human sciences by a sovereign moment of transcendence" –i.e. by postulating a cleavage between the *ontic* and the *ontological* levels of inquiry, Gadamer is according to Ricoeur (1981: 60-61) bound to "plunge himself into an ever more bitter debate, precisely because he takes Dilthey's question seriously", and in this sense he is seen as effecting –in relation to Heidegger's work– "a movement of return from ontology towards epistemological problems" (Ibid: 60).

dimension of Heideggerian philosophy Gadamer treats as being essentially unaffected by Heidegger's later philosophical "turn".

Indeed in view of this Heideggerian influence, it would be arguably as unwise to address Gadamer's hermeneutics from the perspective of contemporary epistemology, as it would be to interpret Heidegger's discussion of Dilthey and Count Yorck in *Being and Time* as a contribution to Neo-Kantian scholarship. One could be even tempted to draw a further analogy with Heidegger's *fundamental ontology* and call Gadamer's philosophy a *fundamental hermeneutics*, as Aylesworth¹⁴⁹ seems to suggest in his contrast between the hermeneutical projects of Gadamer and Ricoeur.

Gadamer's attempt to go beyond the confines of epistemological concerns can be arguably traced even in his interpretation of Husserl's celebrated catchphrase¹⁵⁰ "*to the things themselves*".

In this "common battle cry of all phenomenological researchers" that Heidegger "still repeats" in *Being and Time*¹⁵¹, Gadamer primarily discerns the designation of "a program against the subtle argumentation of *epistemology* which sought to

¹⁴⁹ Indeed Aylesworth (1991: 63) successfully highlights Gadamer's departure from the strict concerns of epistemology by providing a contrast with Ricoeur. In this brief yet elucidating account, hermeneutics is said to be for Gadamer "more fundamental than the methods of the *Geisteswissenschaften*" while proving "a corrective for the methodological alienation of their subject matter". In contrast, Ricoeur is seen as championing the idea that "philosophical hermeneutics must serve an epistemological function vis-à-vis the human sciences, and must incorporate their critical practices into its own discourse". Although as I will attempt to show below it is arguable whether Gadamer's hermeneutics ultimately fails to account for the critical dimension allegedly characteristic of epistemology, the contrast drawn above is still valid in highlighting the importance attributed to the detachment from epistemological concerns in Gadamer's philosophy.

¹⁵⁰ Husserl's overall philosophical trajectory, and especially the coinage of the concept of the *lifeworld* is - in hindsight - seen by Gadamer as expressing an antithesis with the "dominant philosophies of Neo-Kantianism and positivism", as a break with strict epistemic concerns, and consequently as an extension of philosophical claims and investigations "to the wide field of everyday experience" (Gadamer, 1969/1977: 183).

¹⁵¹ "Thus, the term 'phenomenology' expresses a maxim which can be formulated as 'To the things themselves!' It is opposed to all free-floating constructions and accidental findings; it is opposed to taking over any conceptions which only seem to have been demonstrated; it is opposed to those pseudo-questions which parade themselves as 'problems', often for generations at a time" (B&T: 50).

justify science in terms of transcendental philosophy" (Gadamer, 1963/1977:144-145; Gadamer, 1991:14).

Of equal importance is Gadamer's conviction that it would be absurd to interpret this slogan as signifying a sort of "phenomenological realism" and consequently Gadamer attempts to dissociate Max Scheler and Alexander Pfänder from interpretations that see in their usage of the term an opposition of object and subject and a "*realistic departure from idealism*" (Gadamer, 1963/1977: 145).

The "things themselves" of phenomenology, Gadamer argues, are not "*objective entities* posited as transcendent", but rather *intentional entities* experienced in the "filling out of intentional acts"; they are therefore "immediately perceived", and not represented "by signs or symbols" (loc. Cit). Apparently, far from occupying itself primarily with situating and clarifying Husserl's philosophical project, this interpretation fundamentally concerns Gadamer's appropriation of his philosophical inheritance and consequently a disclosure of his own philosophical agenda. Arguably, this search for an alternative to the conceptual framework of modern "mathematical" natural science, and the horizon of its "technical" applications and rules- what Husserl has termed *technization*¹⁵² - characterises most versions of phenomenology, if in varying degrees.

In its *negative*, critical dimension, this attitude of phenomenology provides us with a most welcome link with so-called "critical" versions of social philosophy -

¹⁵² Husserl (1970: 46) employs this term to indicate the process whereby the "original experience" that in being directed at "the subject matter itself" gave birth to a specific mode of theorising (say geometry or mathematics) becomes merely a "sort of *technique*", performed "according to *rules of the game*" and thereby excluding the original act of thinking. Husserl, of course, posits the *purpose* of science in pre-scientific life and thus to the *lifeworld* (Ibid: 50 ff).

especially with classical *Critical Theory*¹⁵³ and most certainly with certain aspects of Weberian sociology. I do not merely refer to the crucial role that the concept of the "progressive" rationalisation or disenchantment of the world played in the formation of the concept of *instrumental rationality*¹⁵⁴, but to the overall attitude expressed by Max Weber in a good number of his works.

For the purposes of the present study it should suffice to briefly refer to Weber's (1991: 138) understanding of the "exact" sciences as "the most important fraction of the process of intellectualisation", his attempt to highlight calculation as the main principle informing this technical and therefore disenchanted perception of the world, and finally to his passionate advocating of the irreducibility of the dimension of meaning and of all ultimate questions in general to the calculative functions of the technical/scientific apparatus¹⁵⁵.

¹⁵³ Thus, there are evident linkages between the criticisms raised by Husserl against the mathematical sciences and the interpretative twist given to Max Weber's sociology with the coinage of the concept of *instrumental reason* by Adorno & Horkheimer. It is certainly not accidental that in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment* Adorno and Horkheimer (1986:25-emphasis added) introduce their discussion on "objectified thinking" after having quoted a large passage from Husserl's *Crisis*, where the philosopher discusses what he called the "Galilean mathematization of the world". In their view then, mathematical procedure is seen as becoming ever since "the ritual for thinking", thereby establishing itself as "necessary and objective", by turning "thought into a thing, an *instrument*-which is its own term for it". The affinity between Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse's "critique of the positivist concept of modern science" to borrow Held's description of the issue- and Husserl's critical stance towards science as spelled out in *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, has not escaped the attention of scholars. For a brief but substantial account on the issue see Held, 1990: 166 ff.

¹⁵⁴ It has been remarked that the concept of "instrumental rationality" incorporates both Weber's concept of *disenchantment* and his methodological concept of "ends-means" rationality, i.e. the ideal typical construction that Weber introduced in order to describe the pursuit of practical ends with methodological accuracy and precise calculation of means performed by social agents in modern societies. In this respect the concept of instrumental reason is seen as depicting reason as being deprived of its *autonomy*, given up its self-reflective power and being adapted to "successful operations, applications and control similar to the applications of technological knowledge" (Teigas, 1995: 5-6).

¹⁵⁵ Weber's remarks on the issue are quite caustic: "Who- aside from certain big children who are indeed found in the natural sciences", asks the thinker in addressing his university audience, "still believes that the findings of astronomy, biology, physics, or chemistry could teach us anything about the meaning of the world"? I furthermore find indispensable both his insight regarding the impossibility of seeing science, or rather "the technique of mastering life which rests upon science" as the 'way to happiness' after Nietzsche's "devastating criticism of those last men who invented happiness" and his appropriation of Tolstoy's answer to the question concerning the meaning of science, according to which "Science is meaningless because it gives no answer to our question, the only question important for us: What should we do and how shall we live?" (Weber, 1991: 142-143).

It needs be remarked though, that this critical distancing, from the world of science and technology does not necessarily¹⁵⁶ entail a simple rejection of science, or even a naïve "faith" in the possibility of a "transcendence" of the *horizon* generated by technology.

This sort of attitude is as uncharacteristic of Gadamer as it is of Husserl and Heidegger, despite common wisdom's conviction about the contrary being the case. It will be recalled that Heidegger (1993: 333) in his –for some celebrated, for others notorious– essay on technology explicitly rejects the view that modern science and technology are "demonic". More importantly, Heidegger even refuses to theorise the technical apparatus as potentially destructive, preferring to place instead both "danger" and "redemption" within technology's enframing power (Ibid: 334).

Indeed, the very conceptualisation of modern technique in terms of an "enframing" shows that Heidegger could not have even envisaged a simple "way out" of the technological "frame". For how else are we to interpret his contention that the ambiguity of technology's essence points "to the mystery of all revealing [and hence also of all concealing], i.e., of truth" (Ibid: 338), if not as an acknowledgement that truth and falsity are in modernity¹⁵⁷ only possible within -and against- this "enframing"?

¹⁵⁶ It is true that very often the critics of modern science give the impression that they unequivocally reject the "scientific worldview". Adorno and Horkheimer (1986: 30) for instance seem to perceive science exclusively as a means of domination over both nature and human beings, while scientific reason is said to be "the mere *instrument* of all-inclusive economic apparatus...[which] serves as a general tool useful for the manufacture of all other tools, firmly directed toward its end, as fateful as the precisely calculated movement of material production, whose result for mankind is beyond all calculation". This is an already "strong" anti-scientific statement, which becomes even bolder when the authors' sarcastic remark that "at last" reason's "old ambition, to be a *pure organ of ends*, has been realised". In any case we should not fail in tracing the impact of the devastation caused by the historical advent of Nazism behind the boldness of this statement.

¹⁵⁷ I here use "modernity" in a quite conceptually "loose" manner. It has to be remarked that Heidegger's treatment of technology does not really square with a "historiological" understanding of the emergence of

Moreover, how should we interpret Heidegger's view that technology is essentially a mystery (Ibid: 334), which remains hidden in spite of the constant proliferation of the technical apparatuses and of our ever-increasing familiarity with it? Is it not true that technology is thought as the destiny of human beings, albeit one that necessarily *conceals* the essence of being-human¹⁵⁸, perhaps in the same manner it *conceals* its own essence?

Furthermore, is it not of considerable significance that Heidegger (Ibid: 340-341) points to the realm of art¹⁵⁹ as that which, in being "fundamentally different" from technology but also "akin" to it, makes possible our confrontation with technology's elusive essence?

Although Heidegger's treatment of technology can only be roughly sketched here, it is still of great importance, for it significantly shapes Gadamer's own claim regarding the universality of hermeneutics. This influence becomes even more apparent if one considers that the hermeneutic claim reaches its utmost intensity right in the midst of an era supposedly

modern science. In a passage reminiscent of –and consonant with– the distinction between authentic historical science and common historiography in *Being and Time*, Heidegger remarks: "Chronologically speaking, modern physical science begins in the seventeenth century. In contrast, machine-power technology develops only in the second half of the eighteenth century. But modern technology, which for the *chronological* reckoning is the later, is from the point of view of the essence holding sway within it, historically earlier" (Heidegger, 1993: 327). It nevertheless seems to me that Vatimo (1998: 81) employs the term in a more straightforward –although not really clarified– manner in his understanding of "modernity as an epoch of technoscience, or in Heidegger's words, as the epoch of the world-picture". In other words, this identification of modernity with techno-science arguably misses the ambivalent nuances still preserved in Heidegger's reflections on the issue that I tried to preserve intact above.

¹⁵⁸ Yet, as remarked above, this endangering of "man's essential unfolding" and of "all revealing us such" that Heidegger attributes to technological "enframing" is simultaneously understood as the "grant" or the "saving power" that has the potential of letting "man see and enter into the highest dignity of his essence". What is more, this "dignity" is said to lie "in keeping watch over the unconcealment- and with it...the concealment of all essential unfolding on this earth" (Heidegger, 1993: 337).

¹⁵⁹ It has to be remarked that Heidegger does not wish to substitute a mere preoccupation with the aesthetic experiencing of art for what he perceives as a "preoccupation with technology", but rather evokes "reflection upon art" to the extent that it does not for its part "shut its eyes to the constellation of truth, concerning which we are *questioning*" (Heidegger, 1993: 340). It should also be noted that Heidegger links technology directly with the Greek *Techne*, to "bringing-forth, to *poiesis*" and therefore to something "poetic" (Ibid: 318-319).

shaped almost exclusively by the instrumental functioning and interests of scientific-technical reason.

The "problem" Gadamer inherits almost directly from the phenomenological-hermeneutic tradition, acquires thus the character of an urgent task. What is actually required is the legitimating of the alleged universality of what Gadamer calls the hermeneutical conditionedness of human beings in the face of modern science, which "stands or falls with the principle of being unbiased and prejudiceless" and of the "technological attitude towards the world" it allegedly breeds. Gadamer (1966/1977: 10) is well aware of the impossibility of theorising this peculiar state of affairs in terms of the viability of any attempt at turning "our human consciousness" against the "world of science" on the assumption that we could thereby develop a kind of anti-science. In fact, we cannot even conceive of the possibility of simply hindering the unfolding of technology's immanent dynamics, for even in case we wished to oppose or confine scientific and technological developments, it would be impossible to succeed in manipulating techno-science.

In other words, Gadamer invites us in this passage to recall Heidegger's fundamental insight on the essence of technology and keep guard against the oversimplified notion that modern science and technology can be treated as

mere "tools"¹⁶⁰ amenable for "use" -or "misuse"- in the service of human volition¹⁶¹.

How is it possible- asks Gadamer in a passage that sounds more contemporary and crucial nowadays than at the time of writing in 1966- to imagine that we could for instance "hinder a genetic researcher because such research threatens to breed a superhuman"(Gadamer, 1966/1977: 10)? Gadamer even attempts to go beyond a conception of modern science and technology in terms of the realisation of a specific mode of interests, and it is arguably for this reason that he refrains from even ascribing an instrumental interest to the genuine scientist. Indeed, he depicts instead the "genuine researcher" in the field of the natural sciences, as being fundamentally indifferent to "technical applications" and accordingly as motivated by "a desire to knowledge and nothing else"¹⁶² (loc. Cit).

¹⁶⁰ Gadamer's treatment is in this context also quite reminiscent of Heidegger's reflections on the issue, especially of his attempt to think the essence of technology beyond its instrumental and anthropological definitions, which for Heidegger "belong together". It could be said that these definitions are thought as being complementary dimensions of a single conception of technology, since the former conceptualises technology as a means to an end and the latter sees it mainly as a "human activity". Furthermore, both aspects of the "instrumental-anthropological" conception arguably represent technology as something *neutral* and such a representation of technology is thought to be quite perilous, since it "makes us utterly blind to the essence of technology" (Heidegger, 1993: 311-312).

¹⁶¹ This does not mean though that the development of technique and the ever increasing immersion of the late-modern world in the so-called "technological attitude" cancels the human will to control and master technology. I think that one of the unmistakably correct insights expressed by Heidegger in his treatment of technology, is that on the contrary "the will to mastery becomes all the more urgent the more technology threatens to slip from human control" (Heidegger, 1993: 313).

¹⁶² There is an interesting parallel between this Gadamer's contention and Popper's attempt to secure the scientific process from the intrusion of other kinds of interests by seeing science as guided by what he termed the "scientific interest in truth". Consequently, despite being well aware of the multiplicity of social interests interfering in scientific investigation and which he explicitly acknowledges in his fourteenth thesis on the logic of the social sciences, he nevertheless sees science mainly in terms of resisting "the confusion of value spheres" and therefore as the attempt to "separate extra-scientific evaluations from questions of truth" (Popper, 1976: 96-97). It has to be remarked though that the parallels between Popper and Gadamer should not be extended beyond this point, which is quite at odds with the more "critical" approaches of say Adorno and Habermas, since even the notion of "truth" has quite distinct and incompatible meanings for Popper and Gadamer. Indeed, the volume of the differentiation between the perspectives mentioned above is amply given by Gadamer's thesis that the dialogue "between philosophy and the philosophy of science never really succeeds", since it is premised on a "philosophy of the sciences that understands itself as a theory of scientific method" and which therefore "dismisses any inquiry that

How can though the task of hermeneutics as formulated by Gadamer still make any sense in face of the "objectivity" that represents the ideal of modern science?

A threefold strategy can be detected in Gadamer's work in this respect:

First, the tracing of a hermeneutic dimension in the sciences' own territory, secondly the recasting of Heidegger's insight regarding the primacy of the *question*, and finally the postulation of a development allegedly overshadowing the emergence and impact of modern science and technique.

Let us have a closer look to the logical thread connecting these intertwined steps, starting from the third assumption. The development Gadamer speaks about stands for nothing else than the emergence of modern historical consciousness, which in being sharply contrasted to pre-modern conceptions of history is sketched as the modern subject's allegedly deep insight into the radical historicity characterising every "present" time and the resulting relative value attributed to the various truth-claims, beliefs, and opinions.

It would nevertheless be a mistake to understand the emergence of the effective historical consciousness¹⁶³ as an exclusively modern phenomenon.

Gadamer (1998: 86) prefers to think of it instead as a relative, though "revolutionary", transformation of a primordial human attitude towards the

cannot be meaningfully characterised as a process of trial and error" disregarding at the same time that "by this very criterion it is itself outside science". Gadamer then sees the "Adorno-Popper debate, like that between Habermas and Albert" as exemplifications of this tension, while observing that by "raising 'critical rationality' to the status of an absolute measure of truth, empirical theory of science regards hermeneutic reflection as theological obscurantism" (T&M: 554).

¹⁶³ In his translation of Gadamer's essay "The Continuity of History and the Existential Moment", Thomas Wren translates the German *wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewusstsein* as "*historically operative consciousness*". More importantly, Wren points to the difficulties associated with translating in English "this favourite expression of Gadamer" and recommends to his readers Richard E. Palmer's *Hermeneutics* "(Evanston: Northwestern U. Press, 1969), p.191" for a substantial discussion of the issue (see Gadamer, 1972: 237, translator's note).

past¹⁶⁴. Now, ever since the appearance of Nietzsche's second "untimely" meditation, it is hardly surprising that this "effective" historical consciousness should be thought as being simultaneously a gift and a curse, as an unprecedented privilege and burden¹⁶⁵ and indeed Gadamer (1998: 35) does not fall short of the reader's expectations by paying due heed to this ambivalence peculiar to the phenomenon of historical consciousness.

It is regrettable though that the specific relationship characterizing the two allegedly unprecedented and "rival" developments is not directly addressed¹⁶⁶, being in fact rather suppressed in favour of the extension of the hermeneutic claim to the domain of the sciences and their technical applications. In this context, statistics are not invoked by the thinker merely as a specific instance of mathematics and of scientific research, which by manipulating "questions" are amenable to propaganda purposes; more importantly they are treated as providing a link between both "natural" and "social" scientific endeavours. In other words, statistics point us to "what" is considered to be scientific in both the natural and the social sciences and they thereby facilitate the passage from a discussion on science to a reflection on methodology. This is indeed a shift of emphasis that would have arguably re-

¹⁶⁴ See also Gadamer's remark in *Truth and Method* that "we would do well not to regard historical consciousness as something *radically new* -as it seems at first- but as a new element in what has always constituted the human relation to the past" (T&M: 283).

¹⁶⁵ We need only recall -for example- Nietzsche's quite vivid metaphor on the human being who would attempt to "feel everything historically", whom he likens with "someone forced to refrain from sleeping, or an animal expected to live only from rumination". There is though "*a degree of insomnia, of rumination, of historical sense*", Nietzsche professes, which "*injures every living thing and finally destroys it, be it a man, a people, or a culture*", and therefore the *unhistorical* and the *historical* are seen as being "equally necessary" for the "health" of cultures, peoples, and individuals (Nietzsche, 1980: 10).

¹⁶⁶ Indeed, if Gadamer's claim that modernity witnesses the co-emergence of two antagonistic but largely novel modes of being, namely a radically historical and an equally radically technological comportment, is to be taken as disclosing a fundamental insight regarding the very essence of modernity, it would be quite appropriate if the *specifics* of the relationship were addressed in full. Is there an element belonging to any

inscribed Gadamer's thought almost entirely to the Diltheyan *problematique* were it not for the pivotal position attributed by the philosopher to *questioning* as such and for an acute awareness of the internal conflict between a philosophy of life and the endorsement of the epistemological ideals of the Enlightenment characteristic of Dilthey's project (see Gadamer, 1998: 67). Thus, the methodological literacy with which scientific apprentices strive to equip themselves is seen as both an indispensable and a confining element for the productive engagement with their subject matter. Given the ample evidence of the sterility that may follow the rigorous employment of austere methodological principles, and which may be more easily discernible in the field of the social or historical sciences, Gadamer's attempt to base the fecundity of any enquiry on an alternative ground is in principle hardly objectionable.

It is then imagination, endowed with the fundamental hermeneutical function of disclosing original questions that is theorized as providing the "spark of scientific inspiration" while pointing to the linguistic dimension as that which can potentially bring about the fulfilment of the historically effected consciousness (Gadamer, 1966/1977: 11-13). With this move, the most elemental –or "natural"– mode of engagement with "language" as exemplified in our immersion in conversation substitutes for methodological rigour, given that "understanding" is theorised as being "language bound", while any "venture into the alien" is seen as supported by our "familiar and common understanding" (Gadamer, 1966/1977: 15).

Far from being theorised from the all too familiar epistemological perspective of "relativism", language and interpretation serve –in a manner at

of the two modes of comportment that triggers the emergence of the other, or do they both belong to a *third*

once familiar and distanced from Dilthey's own investigations- as the very exemplification of the historical consciousness. The emergence of the "historical consciousness" designates the modern awareness of the historical horizon in its entirety and the resultant ability to free oneself from the unreflective and naïve imposition of the standards of the "present" when judging the "past". It follows that "modern consciousness" cannot escape the problem posed by tradition, the "material" of which it has to reflectively appropriate.

Gadamer draws our attention to the fact that the same word, *interpretation*, is used for both the uncovering of the "real meaning" or importance of a specific historical event and for the appropriation of texts. If it can be said that a text is in need of interpretation when it is not directly accessible in the fullness of its meaning, when it resists our intellectual efforts by retaining a degree of alienation, then to say that history requires interpretation would amount to admitting that there is something hidden behind the "surface" of the historical, which should be brought to light.

What is more, interpretation is seen as much more than a methodological principle, and is consequently understood as a catchword, which in functioning like a *symbol* attempts to grasp and represent the overall *attitude* of a historical era (see Gadamer, 1998: 38-39).

The problem posed by interpretation in this wider sense, is therefore a problem of a concurrent proximity with, and distancing from, tradition and is consequently closely bound with the peculiar twist given by Gadamer to the notion of prejudice. This link is more apparent if we consider that the aim of

development, and if so in what sort of manner?

philosophical hermeneutics as set by Gadamer, is formulated in terms of a "transcendence" of the prejudices inherent in the "aesthetic" and the "historical" consciousness, and ultimately of the elevation of the "hermeneutic consciousness" from the status of a mere technique for avoiding misunderstandings" and overcoming "alienations". Apparently, this entails an ambivalent conception of prejudices, viz. both as "distortions" and "errors" of the understanding and as productive constituents of "our being", of "the initial directedness of our whole ability to experience" (Gadamer, 1966/1977: 9).

Now, although Gadamer understands the epistemological orientation of the modern social sciences and the humanities as primarily impregnated and shaped by a Nietzschean insight regarding the ideological distortion inevitably befalling every linguistic assertion, he insists that the confinement of the attributes pertaining to historical consciousness within the limited concerns of methodology cannot but impoverish their philosophical import.

In effect, Gadamer attempts to reverse the commonly held attitude regarding the relationship between scientific and philosophical reasoning by assuming that the historical consciousness is not merely methodologically relevant to philosophy or even to the "philosophy of science", but that it rather presents philosophy with a real challenge. Indeed, the conceptualisation of the "sciences of the spirit" as imperfect manifestations of the allegedly rigorous and "exact" natural sciences amounts according to Gadamer to taking the ultimate risk of relegating philosophy itself to the status of a mere *organum* of these sciences. Viewed from this perspective any attempt to merely establish a distinct *methodology* for the human sciences is seen as insufficient.

Thus, traditional hermeneutics are accused of having "inappropriately narrowed the horizon to which understanding belongs" in simply affirming the *homogeneity* between "the knower and the known" and therefore by ultimately reducing "historical hermeneutics" to "a branch of psychology", as Dilthey "had in mind" (T&M: 260-261).

On the one hand, it could be said that the contemporary notion of method –and the logic it supposedly serves– are inextricably linked with the scientific¹⁶⁷ worldview. On the other hand, this attempt to simulate the methodological premises of the natural sciences can arguably *conceal* what Gadamer sees as the most important dimension of the challenge posed by the *Geisteswissenschaften*, namely the fundamental insight regarding the existence of a conception of *knowledge* and *truth*, which is radically different than that championed by the sciences (Gadamer, 1998:40-41).

This alternative mode of knowing, as long as it remains insufficiently acknowledged –or reflected upon– presents a source of problems for hermeneutic philosophy and the humanities. For first, Gadamer (1998: 42) contends in a crucial reference to Hegel, there is an "elective affinity" between the theoretical frameworks of the human sciences and the Hegelian philosophy of the "spirit"¹⁶⁸, which has moreover had a peculiar impact on the actual development of the *Geisteswissenschaften*.

¹⁶⁷ Gadamer makes emphatically this point in his discussion of Dilthey and Helmholtz's attempt to discover and establish the appropriate "method" for the social sciences, by stressing that "what is called *method* in modern science remains the same everywhere and is only displayed in an especially exemplary form in the natural sciences" (T&M: 7). It is thus in this context that Gadamer's provocative statement that the human sciences "have no method of their own" (T&M: 7-8) should be understood.

¹⁶⁸ Gadamer has mainly in mind primarily Hegel's attempt to grasp and justify in a philosophical manner both the several manifestations of human spirit in its crystallised, institutional forms of law, art, religion, etc for which Hegel uses the term "objective spirit". Hegel's insistence upon the self-reflexive dimension of human spirit, which in its *ideal* mode of perfect self-transparency is also termed "absolute spirit" is of

The "undesirable" aspect of this proximity concerns the rather unfortunate linkage between the trajectory of the "humanities" and the fate of Hegelian philosophy, which saw the former getting involved into a bitter struggle against metaphysics once Hegelianism grew out of favour. It would be a mistake though to interpret this Gadamer's contention as propagating a simple *return* to the motifs –let alone the *convictions*– of Hegelian philosophy.

The problem occupying his thought is of a rather different order and it specifically concerns –as can be also inferred by his reference to the Greeks and especially to Aristotle¹⁶⁹– the possibility of distinct modes of knowing corresponding to different subject-matters.

Method in this view could only be developed and established in an *a posteriori* fashion, while it should also be dictated by the nature of the "thing-itself"¹⁷⁰.

In the case of the human sciences the very notion of following the methodical considerations and attempting to replicate the "objectivity" allegedly attained by

equal importance for Gadamer, since it designates one of the most important dimensions of both the philosophical hermeneutics and the *Geisteswissenschaften*.

¹⁶⁹ Gadamer primarily refers to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, where the philosopher postulates different *ends* corresponding to the various "arts" and different applications of the very notion of *exactitude* for as diverse "arts" as mathematics and oratory. It is important to note that the *mode* of questioning should be according to Aristotle in accordance with the *nature* of the "thing" under scrutiny as the following passage plainly reveals: "πεπεδευμένου γάρ ἐστιν ἐπὶ τοσούτον τακριβὲς ἐπιζητεῖν καθ' ἕκαστον γένος ὅσον ἡ τοῦ πράγματος φύσις ἐπιδέχεται". Rackham's translation of this passage reads: "for it is the mark of the educated mind [person] to expect that amount of exactness in each kind which the nature of the particular subject admits" (Book one, 1094b 25). It should be emphasised that in Gadamer's reading of Aristotle the emphasis is placed on the *nature* of the "subject-matter" or "thing" (ἡ τοῦ πράγματος φύσις), which should not only generate different expectations regarding the degree of exactitude to be attained by different sciences or "arts" but should more importantly *shape* the whole orientation of these sciences and arts.

¹⁷⁰ In linking Gadamer's attempt to elevate hermeneutic consciousness beyond the realm of scientific reflection with his exchange with Habermas commonly known under the rubric of "the Habermas-Gadamer debate", Nicholson (1991: 161-emphasis added) observes that Gadamer's argument concerns the possibility of there being in *moral* and *political* life some "form of reason, some form of knowledge, *different from each and every special science, and different too from the logical form in which sciences are articulated*". According to this author, it is exactly this Aristotelian conception of *phronesis* "or practical reason" that is "operative" in Gadamer's "hermeneutical enterprise" and that has allegedly "escaped Habermas' grasp" due to the "dominant expectation in critical theory of an *overlap of every form of reason with the scientific model*".

the natural sciences would accordingly amount to incurring a major blow to the possibility of bringing to the fore what is essentially human.

In a sense Gadamer uses this differentiation between the epistemic concerns of the sciences of the spirit and the natural sciences in order to treat the old problem of freedom and necessity from yet another perspective. This explains his recourse to a juxtaposition of the trajectories of the Anglo-Saxon and the German philosophical traditions that ultimately leads Gadamer to address the issue in terms of a contrast between induction and freedom, which should be ultimately interpreted in terms of a postulated breach between nature and history.

Gadamer (1998: 44-45) traces in the thought of Mill and Hume the fundamental principle, according to which the *inductive method* forming the basis of every empirical science should also provide the ground for the moral sciences, since in both cases the aim is to identify regularities and trends that could in turn render the prediction of individual cases possible. This conception at best admits only of a difference in the degree of "predictive certainty" with which science treats nature and the social and "ethical" phenomena, in the same manner that it recognises a difference of exactitude between physics and meteorology. Gadamer does not deny that the adoption of this methodological model has often brought success to the human sciences, as for example in the case of the "psychology of the masses". He thinks though that it still obliterates the "real" purpose of historical knowledge, namely the understanding of historical events in their *uniqueness* (Gadamer, 1998: 46).

It could be argued that Gadamer discloses here a quite important problem, which as mentioned in the previous chapter was also cursorily

addressed by Castoriadis, namely the possibly different modality of the *laws* or *rules* underpinning historical experience, only to cover it up again by simply pointing to the uniqueness of historical phenomena. It might indeed be the case that history is primarily concerned with understanding the emergence and development of a specific nation, state, or peoples as Gadamer¹⁷¹ (1998: 47) suggests. This hardly entails though that the way in which peoples, nations and states emerge and change in general is irrelevant to either historical knowledge or even to historical experience.

Gadamer's awareness of the importance of this more general or universal dimension is traceable in the way in which he pays due heed to the concept of *Bildung*¹⁷² in his discussion of the importance of the humanist tradition and its "guiding concepts" for the development and orientation of contemporary social science. Gadamer traces historically the emergence of the term in Klopstock's *Messiah* and its first concrete formulation in Herder's definition as "the rising up to humanity through culture" (T&M: 10). It is nevertheless in the work of Hegel, and especially in the section on the formation of self-consciousness in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* that according to Gadamer the concept attains its maturity, since it is explicitly correlated with the concept of *Geist*.

What these concepts signify is the break with the "natural" and the "immediate" characteristic of the human being, which at the same time implies

¹⁷¹ In a quite illuminating passage of *Truth and Method* Gadamer claims that the experience of the socio-historical world "cannot be raised to a science by the inductive procedure of the natural sciences" mainly because "historical research does not endeavour to grasp the concrete phenomenon as an instance of a universal rule. The universal law does not serve only to confirm a law from which practical predictions can be made. Its ideal is rather to understand the phenomenon itself in its unique and historical concreteness" (T&M: 4-5).

¹⁷² It is important to note that Gadamer sees in the very concept of *Bildung* i.e. the concept of "self-formation, education, or cultivation" a new and quite promising interpretation of the ideals of the "enlightened reason", a "renewal of literature and aesthetic criticism, which overcame the outmoded

a movement from the individual to the *universal*. This postulated supersession is furthermore conceived in terms of a *task*, given that the rising to universality always entails sacrificing one's particularity and restraining the immediate satisfaction of one's desire¹⁷³ (T&M: 12). Regarding *practical Bildung* this restraint is best exemplified in *work*, where "in forming the object" or as Gadamer has it "in being selflessly active and concerned with a universal" the working consciousness is said to raise itself "above the immediacy of its existence to universality; or as Hegel puts it, by forming the thing it forms itself" (T&M: 13). Gadamer then traces even in this "practical mode" of *Bildung*, even if in an embryonic form of existence, the elements that in his interpretation of Hegel become "completely clear"¹⁷⁴ in the idea of *theoretical Bildung*.

There is evidently nothing novel in the idea that even in its more blatantly "practical" aspects Hegel's *Phenomenology* points also to the workings

baroque ideal of taste and of Enlightenment rationalism", and which more importantly "prepared the ground for the growth of the historical sciences in the nineteenth century" (T&M: 9).

¹⁷³ See Hegel (1977:118): "Desire has reserved to itself the pure negating of the object and thereby is unalloyed feeling of self. But that is the reason why this satisfaction is itself only a fleeting one, for it lacks the side of objectivity and permanence. Work, on the other hand, is desire held in check, fleetingness staved off; in other words, work forms and shapes the thing". It would be indeed difficult to overemphasise the significance of the belonging-together of *work* and *desire* in Hegel's *Phenomenology*. Indicative are Hegel's (1977: 132-133) remarks on the "nullity" with which the world of *work* and *desire* is vested in the case of the "unhappy consciousness" and the subsequent sundering of *actuality* in two parts, one *null* and one *sanctified* and unchangeable, in the same manner that in Hegel's view the unhappy consciousness is itself breached in two.

¹⁷⁴ One can detect a metaphorical dimension in the very manner in which Gadamer sees practical *Bildung* attaining a sort of self-transparency and maturing in its theoretical aspect. This becomes apparent once Gadamer's discussion on *Bildung* is contrasted with one of the actual *Bildung* metaphors used by Hegel (1977:2) in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and which has been already considered in relation to Heidegger in footnote 60 of chapter one. Here, for purposes concerning the clarity of the presentation it was deemed necessary to reproduce verbatim the entire metaphor, which reads: "The bud disappears in the bursting-forth of the blossom, and one might say that the former is refuted by the latter; similarly, when the fruit appears, the blossom is shown up in its turn as a false manifestation of the plant, and the fruit now emerges as the truth of it instead". The reader should be reminded that this metaphor is used by Hegel to refer to the supersession of philosophical systems and has been often criticised as offering an account of a progressive realisation of truth. Hegel's absolute spirit and his by now infamous motto "what is rational is actual; and what is actual is rational" (Hegel, 1991: 20) have not exactly worked in favour of an alternative interpretation of the place *Bildung* occupies in his work. It seems quite challenging though that Hegel uses a metaphor from the realm of nature, with its unending *cycles* and where it is nonsensical to speak of "progress" in order to draw an analogy with the workings of the spirit.

of the "spirit", the celebrated "labour of the concept" being certainly more than a linguistic *lapsus*, or a figure of speech. Gadamer wishes nonetheless to critically evaluate the inextricable relationship between the practical and the intellectual spheres in Hegel's philosophy without reproducing stereotypical objections against speculative idealism. Hence he refrains from adopting a standpoint that would interpret Hegel's treatment of labour as being primarily concerned with theoretically justifying the labour of philosophical thought. This stance is perhaps best exemplified in his unfavourable treatment¹⁷⁵ of Marx's critique of Hegel's *Phenomenology*, which he sees as being distorted by the "dogmatic conception of consciousness and of idealism" that in Gadamer's view Marx "shared with his contemporaries", and which restrained Marx from recognising that "Hegel could have never dreamt for a moment that work is only the work of thought and that what is reasonable would be realised solely by thought" (Gadamer, 1976: 73).

It could be thus correct to assume that Gadamer would like to acknowledge a certain "precedence" of the intellectual over the material dimensions in Hegel's treatment of labour without accusing him of not reading "spirit as an isolated aspect" of labour, but instead, "conversely", dissolving labour "into a moment of spirit", as Adorno (1993: 24) and the whole of the Marxist-inspired, critical tradition, would have it.

¹⁷⁵ Gadamer's statements regarding Marx's interpretation of the master and slave parable in the *Phenomenology* are quite bold. The thinker thus states that Marx's critique has only added confusion to the attempt to understand this chapter and that his use of this celebrated metaphor is in reality nothing but a *misuse*. This does not mean though that Gadamer rejects *in toto* Marx's critique of Hegel's philosophy since he rightly acknowledges that Marx "found the point at which to apply his criticism of Hegel" not in the *Phenomenology* "but rather, as seemed more appropriate, in Hegel's philosophy of right" (see Gadamer, 1976: 72-73).

What is though the real significance of Gadamer's attempt to acknowledge *Bildung* as an element of spirit without at the same time "being tied to Hegel's philosophy of absolute spirit, just as the insight into the historicity of consciousness is not tied to his philosophy of world history" (T&M: 15)? Arguably, his intension is but to unearth this "basic" and allegedly "correct" idea behind the "classicist's prejudice" echoed in the words¹⁷⁶ of Hegel, "the Gymnasium director" (T&M: 14).

This "idea" is furthermore recognisably similar to Gadamer's celebrated thesis on the *fusion of horizons* and consists precisely in recognising oneself in the *alien*, in having the ability to become "at home" in the un-homely. More importantly, this idea brings to the fore the phenomenon that for Gadamer constitutes the "essence of *Bildung*", namely the *return* to oneself out of the alien, which moreover certainly "presupposes alienation". Thus, every single "individual" raising oneself out of one's "natural being" to the "spiritual" spheres is bound to find in the "language, customs, and institutions" of one's "own people a pre-given body of material which, as in learning to speak" one has to make one's own¹⁷⁷ (T&M: 14).

If Herder's drawing of *Bildung* were recalled it would be made clear that Gadamer wishes to dispense with the idea of an *origin*, and ultimately with the

¹⁷⁶ Gadamer's (T&M: 14) quotation is from Hegel's *Nurnberger Schriften*, ed. Hoffmeister, p.312 (1809 Address).

¹⁷⁷ Gadamer (1966/1977: 16) believes though that there is "no captivity within a language not even within our native language". "To master the foreign language", says Gadamer in the same essay, "means precisely that when we engage in speaking it in the foreign land, we do not constantly consult inwardly our own world and its vocabulary...and only because we never know foreign languages well enough do we always have something of this feeling [i.e. the feeling of constantly translating from our "own" language]. But it is nevertheless speaking, even if perhaps a stammering speaking". More importantly, this "stammering speaking" attests according to Gadamer to the *infinity* of language and it is precisely on those grounds that the philosopher rejects as unfounded the assumption that the existence of various languages signifies a *fragmentation of reason*. In opposition to this assumption Gadamer counter-poses that "precisely through

idea prevalent in the philosophies of the age, according to which the *progressive* development of *reason* could be established as a law of *nature*.

In his prize-winning essay of 1770 on the "origin of language", Herder identifies reason as the element that confers upon the human species a "peculiar direction of its own". Drawing an analogy between the child growing into adulthood and the history of the human species, Herder attempts to establish the notion of a gradual development of reason from the early stages of humanity to modernity.

Is not "the whole tree", asks Herder (1772/1986: 133-134) in a metaphor that seems to have inspired Hegel's use of the similar imagery in the *Phenomenology* "already contained in the seed"? In a similar vein, human beings are seen as being naturally predisposed for the acquirement of language, which in compliance with what Herder calls the "first law of nature" is said to spring forth in a *spontaneous* manner, "as the impulse of an embryo towards birth". Thus Herder understands the origination of language as the state of affairs that *impels* humanity to develop in a continuous and unbroken manner its mental faculties, in a striving "towards" the attainment of "full manhood" (Herder, 1772/1986: 155). It is exactly this progressive understanding of history that Gadamer wishes to dispense with, without having to sacrifice Herder's insights on the importance of language and of culture.

Thus, Gadamer gives an interpretative twist to the age-old question of alienation and appropriation, which is now modelled almost explicitly on the "many-layered problem of translation", from the "structure" of which the

our *finitude*, the particularity of our being, which is evident even in the variety of languages, the infinite dialogue is opened in the direction of truth that we are" (loc. Cit).

"general problem of making what is alien our own" can be allegedly formulated in a more transparent manner (Gadamer, 1967/1977: 19).

Significantly, there are strong Heideggerian echoes in this attempt to attain higher insights from those entertained by critical reasoning in Gadamer's pointing to the inseparability of alienation *and* appropriation as phenomena occurring in language, and in his subsequent attempt to make this couplet pivotal for philosophical reflection.

This task becomes even more complex by the explicit demand to guard hermeneutical reasoning against a mere relapsing into a pre-critical standpoint, assuming of course that this kind of relapsing is still even thinkable. One needs only recall Heidegger's early conception of truth as *α-λήθεια*, as *emergence* out of the forgetfulness or of the concealment of being in order to pay due heed to Gadamer's (1972/1977: 94) claim that the truth attained by what he calls *the* hermeneutically enlightened consciousness, i.e. "the truth of translation" is of a higher order than that established by any philosophical or scientific account based on a "naïve" belief in objectivity. It is indifferent to Gadamer whether this claim and the consequent striving for the attainment of a state of affairs that could be "completely free of prejudice" stems from "the delusion of an absolute enlightenment", or from the equally fallacious vision "of an empiricism free of all previous opinions in the tradition of metaphysics", or even from the ill-destined attempt at unmasking and "getting beyond science through ideological criticism".

In all those cases, the alleged superiority of the hermeneutical mode of truth is entirely dependent on the event of *appropriation*, which "allows the foreign to

become one's own" without annulling it in a critical manner¹⁷⁸ or even "reproducing it uncritically".

Contrary to these attitudes, hermeneutical reflection is said to preserve and enrich the alien by "explicating it within one's own horizons with one's own concepts and thus giving it new validity" (Gadamer, 1972/1977: 94).

Thus, far from being theorised solely in terms of a radical opposition to scientific reasoning and to the alienation from "natural consciousness" encapsulated in the concept of scientific method, hermeneutical reflection can be indirectly of service even to the methodological concerns of science.

In Gadamer's view this can be effected by making explicit the "guiding" pre-understandings in scientific endeavours and thereby "open new dimensions of questioning", although this opening of new dimensions necessarily involves also bringing to awareness the cost entailed by the establishment of rigorous scientific methods. Gadamer has here in mind the obliteration and expulsion effected by scientific abstraction to certain dimensions of life experienced by the so-called "natural consciousness", and to which natural consciousness is

¹⁷⁸ However, this attempt to surmount the confines of critical reflection should not be interpreted as a rejection of the critical faculties of reason on Gadamer's part. In an interview with Christian Gehron and Jonathan Rée, Gadamer explicitly identifies *critical reason* as the *principal* socio-political and personal resource against the "new forms of slavery" in the industrialised, "mass-societies" of the west. "We need critical courage", says the philosopher as he reflects on the possibility of emancipation from the forms of political oppression and obedience resulting from the industrial revolution. In fact, he emphatically points that "the only way to combat" this alienating state of affairs is to "exercise our critical intelligence" and to "create free spaces for creative behaviour". Also in a reference to his own country he asserts that the mass media "in Germany are not really prepared for the challenge of stimulating critical thinking. They lack a training in judgement, in self-criticism, criticism of institutions, criticism of government" (Gadamer, 1995: 31). Although parts of the reflections cited above might seem slightly dated or even inaccurate to sociologists specialising in debates on post-industrial societies, or on "information societies" etc., still these passages are invaluable in that they weaken unfavourable interpretations of Gadamer's work, based on allegations that his work promotes an *uncritical* stance towards political institutions. It seems to this reader though that accusations of this kind are the results of a fundamental misunderstanding of the role and meaning the concept of *tradition* has in Gadamer's thought.

furthermore always tied¹⁷⁹ by virtue of its being "the consumer of the inventions and information attained by science" (Gadamer, 1967/1977: 39).

Despite the easily identifiable tendency to reproduce a *tension* between the natural and the social sciences, which is ultimately nothing but a tension between science and philosophy¹⁸⁰, it is still difficult to miss the importance of Gadamer's point regarding the irreducibility of the phenomenon of *life* to strict epistemic concerns, this "structural correlation between life and self-consciousness" that he sees as having been "already developed in Hegel's *Phenomenology*" (T&M: 252).

Gadamer is of the opinion that even the preserved manuscript fragments of the *Phenomenology* attest to the central importance the concept of life holds in Hegel's philosophy even as early as during his last years in Frankfurt. The phenomenon of life is thus understood as making the decisive transition from consciousness to self-consciousness, while this connection far from being "artificial" or precarious reveals an indisputable analogy between self-consciousness and life.

¹⁷⁹ Gadamer (1967/1977: 39) expresses this also in Wittgenstein's terminology in the following manner: "The language games of science remain related to the metalanguage presented in the mother tongue", a claim he supports with references to the way in which scientific advancements enter the "societal consciousness" through the educational institutions, and with the aid of "modern informational media". It has to be remarked that this is a slightly disappointing elaboration both from a philosophical and from a sociological perspective.

¹⁸⁰ See again Gadamer's remark in the interview cited above, according to which the main source of his political disagreement with Habermas is that in Gadamer's opinion Habermas "believes in science as a means of solving all the problems of society". Gadamer is adamant that he has no belief in that and that he on the contrary thinks that "without friendship and solidarity nothing is possible". More importantly, Gadamer spells out his "problem" with the position held by the "Frankfurt school" and "also of Marx himself", which was "always too idealistic" in his eyes. The "problem" for Gadamer is that human beings "are not angels", while although it is true that the "Frankfurt School and the communistic vision of the world had something great in them, something fascinating", Gadamer feels he has learned from his "life experience" that human nature is different. "I was not particularly Christian", says the philosopher, "but I learned something about original sin, and I have found it confirmed" (Gadamer, 1995: 34).

Somewhat predictably this analogy is drawn from the perspective of appropriation, since on the one hand the "fundamental fact of being alive" is understood in terms of assimilation, where differentiation is at the same time "non-differentiation" and the "alien" gets thereby appropriated. Similarly this "structure of being alive" is on the other hand said to have its correlative in the "nature" of self-consciousness the being of which consists—as shown by Hegel—in the ability to make everything the "object" of its knowledge and "yet in everything that it knows, it knows itself". In other words, having in the first instance lost itself to the objects of the world of its concern, self-consciousness "folds back" and returns to itself (T&M: 252-253).

Furthermore, the *Phenomenology* has the merit of showing how life is really *grasped*—even if in a "preliminary" and "incomplete" a manner—at the very moment when one attains "inner consciousness", i.e. awareness of one's own living. It follows that *desire* is both the source and the consummation of this primal awareness, since the becoming conscious of oneself in desire is annihilated when a specific desire is satiated.

This is the point where in Gadamer's view the work of Count Yorck, who in a Darwin-inspired imagery is pronounced to be the "missing link" between Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* and Husserl's *Phenomenology of Transcendental Subjectivity*, is acclaimed as becoming "most fruitful" (T&M: 253-254).

More specifically, the derivation of "a methodological standard" from the correlation between life and self-consciousness elaborated in Yorck's definition of the nature and task of philosophy in terms of projection and abstraction is seen as a superior achievement compared to the philosophical investigations of Dilthey and also to the work of the "Historical school".

In particular, Yorck is seen as analysing the phenomenon of life in a manner that goes beyond Dilthey's epistemological intentions,¹⁸¹ and therefore as maintaining the "metaphysical connection between life and self-consciousness worked out by Hegel", while paving the way for Heidegger's confrontation with "Husserl's eidetic phenomenology" and with the entire philosophical tradition of the West (T&M: 253-254).

Heidegger's renewal of the question concerning the "meaning of being" is then seen as recognition of the unresolved problem of metaphysics in its "ultimate culmination", namely in the guise of the concept of spirit "as conceived by speculative idealism". Heidegger's "grounding of the hermeneutics of facticity" is thus said to have progressed beyond both the concept of spirit as developed in classical idealism and the "thematic of transcendental consciousness purified by phenomenological reduction" (T&M: 258).

At the same time, and although it is acknowledged that his concerns were not in the least *methodological* Heidegger's investigations in the historicity of human

¹⁸¹ Gadamer's main criticism of Dilthey is that his whole philosophical *oeuvre* is permeated by an irreconcilable breach between his philosophy of life and his adherence to the ideals of "scientific Enlightenment", i.e. the adoption of the "standpoint of reflection and *doubt*" that allegedly inform "all forms of scientific reflection" and which run counter to the forms of reflection that are "immanent in life". The scientific mode of certainty, namely the one established by the process of *verification* that has been forged on the anvil of "Cartesian doubt" is then said to eradicate the more "immediate, living certainty that all ends and values have when they appear in human consciousness" (T&M: 238). It is quite important to note that Gadamer extends this criticism further in detecting in Dilthey's adherence to the ideals of the Enlightenment and especially to the Cartesian way of proceeding through *doubt*, a *covering up* of the specificity of historical knowledge and experience. In Gadamer's reading of Dilthey this concealment of the historical is exemplified in Dilthey's attempt to harmonize the mode of knowledge peculiar to the human sciences with the methodological criteria of the natural sciences. Gadamer does not mean to say that the search for scientific *certainty* and *objectivity* characteristic of Dilthey could be interpreted as a sign of Dilthey's unawareness of the general state of uncertainty brought about by the *historical forces* of modern life. Nevertheless, Dilthey's taking recourse to *Romantic Hermeneutics* with its emphasis on the philological interpretation of texts and the fundamental assumption concerning the possibility of a congenial understanding to be achieved in the relationship between the "I and Thou" is seen as resulting to the obliteration of the historical nature of experience. Thus, Dilthey's conception of the historical world in terms of a text amenable to interpretation entailed in Gadamer's view a reduction of history to intellectual history since by resembling to a text everything in history becomes in principle intelligible, while the

existence are seen as transcending the Cartesian conception of science that plagued Dilthey's own investigations and that was allegedly responsible for the *aporias of historicism*, with regard to which Heidegger "attained a fundamentally new position" (T&M: 259).

Husserl's investigations had already placed doubt on the differentiation between historical and natural sciences by understanding both as "achievements of the intentionality of universal life, i.e. of absolute historicity". Nevertheless, with Heidegger understanding ceases to be a methodological grounding of philosophy as with Husserl or "a resigned ideal of human experience adopted in the old age of the spirit" as with Dilthey. It rather becomes the "*original form of the realisation of Dasein*, which is being-in-the-world", it is Dasein's very mode of being, "insofar as it is potentiality-for-being and *possibility*" (T&M: 259).

Gadamer identifies the uncovering of Dasein's temporal structure, and especially Heidegger's theorisation of the understanding and of historical existence as projection or as transcendence "beyond the existent" and the familiar, as the philosopher's most important contribution to the de-compartmentalisation of the hermeneutic claim. We have already indicated Heidegger's attempt to ground the historical sciences on Dasein's authentic historicity. If we accept this reasoning, it then follows that historical knowledge is for Heidegger also a projection, although not a projection "in the sense of a plan" the imposition of the historian's *will* or the reshuffling of "things" in conformity with the "wishes, prejudices, or promptings of the powerful".

This projection is on the contrary seen as "adapted to the object", and it is thus pronounced to be a "*mensuratio ad rem*". This thing, the *historical*, is

inquiry into the historical *past* takes up the mode of *deciphering* the "hieroglyphs of history" and it is not

certainly not a "factum brutum", nor is it something merely "present at hand", but it ultimately has "the same mode of being as Dasein" (T&M: 261). Gadamer rightly asks his reader to pay attention to this last statement, which is arguably as often repeated as it is misunderstood. If we interpret this statement as signifying a "homogeneity" between the knower and the known that makes *empathetic understanding* possible, then historical hermeneutics would have to simply be a specific branch of psychology.

Nevertheless Heidegger's position is rightly shown to have the advantage of disclosing this peculiar state of affairs where the knower and the known are not "present-at-hand" in an *ontic* manner but they share the "mode of being of historicity" (T&M: 261).

Thus, to study history insofar as we are "ourselves historical", nay because "we are" historical, would mean that the "historicity of human Dasein in its *expectancy* and its *forgetting* is the condition" of the human ability to "re-present the *past*" (T&M: 262). Here we encounter a specific appropriation of the Heideggerian conception of authentic historicity, namely one that primarily emphasises the dimension of *belonging to a tradition* as a prerequisite of historical action and of the historical sciences.

Important though this interpretation might be, it still does not place due emphasis to the fact that Heidegger explicitly saw the enactment and the continuous re-writing of history as stemming from the conscious repetition of the possibilities inherent in the historical action of another human being with whom the historical agent "identifies" and that Heidegger provocatively calls a

treated as a mode of historical experience in its own right (T&M: 240-241).

*hero*¹⁸². The implications of this statement are significant, especially if we rule out the possibility of this conception being the result of ideological prejudices on Heidegger's part as the reader might be inclined to think in the first instance.

First, the historical is in this manner emphatically shown to be different from the ontic or the extant, and this not in terms of abstract forms or systems, but in a rather concrete, personal manner.

Secondly, it can be argued that such a conception entails that the *historical* is primordially accessible through identification.

If this interpretation is correct, then this identification must precede a more "objectified" understanding of the historical past and its heritage, let alone the refined theoretical elaborations of the "past", "tradition", etc.

Gadamer places more importance on the first consequence discussed above, and this may well be due to an acknowledged difference of emphasis between the philosophical trajectories of the two thinkers. Gadamer is adamant that Heidegger's intention in *Being and Time* was neither to contribute to the development of "a historical hermeneutics" nor to champion a particular "historical ideal of existence", and this is the reason that Gadamer guards himself from drawing "overhasty conclusions" from Heidegger's existential analytic of Dasein.

Despite this word of caution, for Gadamer the main advancement of Heidegger's hermeneutics of facticity in relation with Husserl's phenomenology, is that we cannot envisage a state of affairs where a "freely chosen relation toward one's own being can get behind the facticity of this being".

¹⁸² See e.g. Heidegger's explicit identification of the "authentic repetition of a possibility that has been"

The philosopher feels thus justified to say that he moves on firm ground by following Heidegger's insight that if the "structure of Dasein is thrown projection" and therefore "in realising its being Dasein is understanding", then the same must hold true of the mode of understanding peculiar to the human sciences. More explicitly put, the "existential structure of Dasein must be expressed in the understanding of historical tradition as well" (T&M: 264).

Is it a mere coincidence though that with these words and with the announcement that his "elements of a theory of hermeneutic experience" would be worked out following Heidegger, Gadamer concludes the section of *Truth and Method* entitled "overcoming the epistemological problem" (loc. cit)?

with Dasein's ability to "choose its hero" (B&T: 437).

3.2 The Hermeneutic Functioning of Prejudice & Historical Distancing

This nature of the struggle of the Enlightenment with Errors, that of fighting itself in them; and of condemning in them what it itself asserts, is explicit for us, or what Enlightenment and its struggle is *in itself*. It is the first Aspect of this struggle, however, the defilement of Enlightenment through the adoption by its self-identical Purity of a negative attitude, that is an object for faith. Which therefore comes to know it as falsehood, unreason. And as ill-intentioned, just as Enlightenment regards faith As error and prejudice. (Hegel, 1977: 333).

"Science" as a Prejudice...

A "scientific" interpretation of the world...might therefore Still be one of the *most stupid* of all possible interpretations Of the world, meaning that it would be one of the poorest In meaning. (Nietzsche, 1974: 334-335)

It has already been remarked that Gadamer's conception of the hermeneutically derived *truth* entails the attribution of an ambivalent status to the notion of *prejudice*. Anyone familiar with Nietzsche's (1974: 335) demolishing critique of "scientific reason" and his defence of the "*rich ambiguity*" inherent in human existence won't be taken aback by Gadamer's attempt to derive positive results from this state of affairs. It is also hardly surprising that the philosopher attempts to theoretically justify his position with recourse to Heidegger's elaborations on the problem of fore-having, fore-conception and fore-sight, as integral parts of assertion and interpretation¹⁸³. More specifically Gadamer takes recourse to Heidegger's working of the problem of the 'hermeneutic circle' in section 32 of the first part of *Being and Time*, which tackles the phenomena of "understanding and interpretation". Undoubtedly, Heidegger's inquiry into the nature of understanding and interpretation is in

this context performed from the vantage point of the question concerning the meaning of being.

It is therefore "coloured" by the thinker's attempt to show how the ontological question cannot be answered through a simple contrast of Being with *entities* or even by assuming Being as a *ground* supporting those entities. Furthermore, the very notion of a *ground* is shown to become accessible "only as meaning, even if it is itself the abyss of meaninglessness" (B&T: 193-194).

Understanding is therefore seen as pertaining to "the whole being-in-the-world" due to its having the special property of disclosing Da-sein's "there" and its existence. Thus, every interpretation that can contribute to understanding must begin with a preconception of that which has to be interpreted. This "fact" has according to Heidegger always been remarked, even though mainly in "the area of derivative ways of understanding", especially in the field of *philology*. Heidegger furthermore suggests that since philology is traditionally regarded as a specific branch of science it is almost invariably seen as having to comply with the ideal of scientific research, namely the purification of the process of demonstration from ungrounded presuppositions. It follows, that since understanding and interpretation necessarily depend on fore-conceptions and "expectations", not only philology but even historiological interpretations have often been represented as defective modes of scientific enquiry.

This representation Heidegger remarks, is also reinforced by the fundamental positions of certain philosophical currents, given that the circle in which every interpretative understanding is entangled is "according to the most elementary rules of logic", nothing but "a *circulus vitiosus*" (B&T: 194).

¹⁸³ "Like any interpretation whatever, assertion necessarily has a fore-having, a fore-sight, and a fore-

It is true, that although historiology is in this manner excluded *a priori* from what is considered to be rigorous and valid knowledge it is nevertheless "permitted to compensate" for this defect "to some extent through the *spiritual signification* of its *object* (B&T: 194).

Moreover, Heidegger rightly suggests that the view according to which the hermeneutic circle is but a negative and defective state of affairs, should not by any means be considered the exclusive privilege of the philosopher or the natural scientist. To the contrary, it rather finds its more persuasive expression in the person of the zealous historian who would happily try to step "outside" the circle in the expectation of creating a historiology equally independent from the observer's standpoint as natural science was thought to be prior to the advancement of quantum physics.

It is this deep-rooted conviction that sees the hermeneutic circle as a vicious one that Heidegger wishes to subvert by insisting that the *decisive* move would be to enter the circle in the correct manner rather than attempting to avoid it¹⁸⁴. How does Heidegger wish to establish the positive significance of the hermeneutic circle?

Primarily, by showing that the "circle of the understanding" does not involve the production and circulation of arbitrary forms of knowledge and that therefore far from being a vicious circle or "even a circle which is merely tolerated", it

conception as its existential foundations" (B&T: 199).

¹⁸⁴ In a discussion with Eugen Fink and one of the participants in the *Heraclitus Seminar* Heidegger responds in the following manner to Fink's incitement to "enter" the hermeneutic circle in order to interpret the meaning of *τα πάντα* in Heraclitus' fragments: "Wittgenstein says the following. The difficulty in which thinking stands compares with a man in a room, from which he wants to get out. At first, he attempts to get out through the window, but it is too high for him. Then he attempts to get out through the chimney, which is too narrow for him. If he simply turned around, he would see that the door was open all along. We ourselves are permanently set in motion and caught in the hermeneutical circle" (Heidegger & Fink, 1993:17).

contains the positive possibility of the "most primordial kind of knowing", although in a hidden manner (B&T: 195).

This move allows Heidegger to show that the hermeneutic circle is grounded on the *existential* constitution of Dasein and thus convincingly argue that historiology as a specific expression of the "entity" which as being-in-the-world "has itself a circular structure" is not less rigorous than mathematics, but rather that mathematics is a narrower mode of knowing, "because the existential foundations relevant for it lie in a narrower range" (B&T: 195).

As remarked above though, Heidegger does not wish to subvert the ideal of the Enlightenment and merely substitute fancy and myth for scientific certainty. This is why he stresses that we should guard against our fore-having, fore-sight, and fore-conceptions being presented to us in the guise of "popular conceptions" and fanciful myths and that we should tirelessly re-work these fore-structures in terms of the things themselves so as to make "the scientific theme secure" (B&T: 195).

In his interpretation of the passages discussed above Gadamer rightly suggests that the ontologically positive significance of the hermeneutic circle as established by Heidegger entails that the constant task of interpretation is explicitly seen as dictated by the things themselves, while interpretation and understanding are explicitly formulated in terms of *projecting*. Heidegger is thus seen as describing an interpretive process where every revision of fore-projections is capable of generating another projection thereby making possible both the co-existence of rival projections and the arrival at more suitable interpretations, i.e. interpretations that do more justice to the "unity of meaning" (T&M: 266-267).

More importantly, by formulating the hermeneutical task in terms of "a questioning of things" Heidegger showed in Gadamer's view that meanings "cannot be understood in an arbitrary way" (T&M: 268-269). Thus, the task of securing the scientific theme with recourse to the things themselves points us directly to the principal hermeneutic requirement, viz. the sensitivity of the way in which one's own fore-conceptions interfere in the act of interpretation. It follows that this interference distorts the understanding, which is seen as ideally informed directly from the things themselves.

At the same time, this orientation to the things themselves is seen as a distancing from the traditional, irreconcilable split between subject and object characteristic of modern philosophy. If Dilthey's discussion of the hermeneutic circle served as a means of separating his own position from "the post-Schleiermacherian scientific epoch", then Heidegger's discussion of the issue, in being directed "toward the structure" of being-in-the-world, can be interpreted as concurrently pointing towards the overcoming of the "subject-object bifurcation", which was anyway the "main thrust" of Heidegger's analytic of the Dasein.

Gadamer draws an analogy between Heidegger's analysis of tools in the first part of *Being and Time* in order to show how the circularity of the hermeneutic understanding can be a productive rather than a limiting condition. In the same manner in which "one who uses a tool does not treat that tool as an object", Gadamer asserts, Dasein's understanding of itself "in its Being and in its world" cannot be adequately grasped in terms of a comportment toward "definite objects of knowledge", but has to be seen as "the carrying out of Being-in-the-world itself" (Gadamer, 1989b: 22-23).

Despite acknowledging that Heidegger's *Kehre* signified the abandonment of the hermeneutic question on Heidegger's part, mainly due to his conviction that the hermeneutic theme would "never enable him to break out of the sphere of transcendental reflection". Gadamer wishes to explore the possible paths that would legitimate Heidegger's discussion of "that Being, which is not the Being of beings".

Importantly, Gadamer understands his own contribution as consisting in the discovery that "no conceptual language, not even what Heidegger called the language of metaphysics, represents an unbreakable constraint upon thought if only a thinker allows himself to trust language" (Gadamer, 1989b: 23). Thus in Gadamer's eyes the task of hermeneutic understanding is not to effect a radical break with tradition as the Enlightenment¹⁸⁵ would have it, but to exclude everything that hinders our attempt to adequately understand the elements transmitted to us by tradition (T&M: 269).

Furthermore, the recognition of the unavoidably prejudicial character of all understanding constitutes the thrust of the hermeneutic problem, which inscribes historicism within the conceptual framework of the Enlightenment despite historicism's critique of rationalism and of natural philosophy (see T&M: 270). One of the "prejudices" historicism *shares* with the whole Enlightenment movement is according to Gadamer the witless conception of "historical distance" (1998: 126-127) as a hurdle that should be surpassed if the historian is to interpretatively grasp the past.

¹⁸⁵ Thus the principal difference between the movement that culminated in the formation of classical Greek philosophy and is known under the rubric *Greek Enlightenment* and the modern European *Enlightenment* is in Gadamer's view their stance towards tradition. Gadamer even thinks that the classical ethics – in effect Aristotle's ethics – are *superior* to modern moral philosophy since classical ethics "grounds the transition from ethics to 'politics', as the art of right legislation, on the indispensability of tradition" (T&M: 281).

Thus, according to historicism's premises, objectivity was attainable for the *Geisteswissenschaften* to the extent to which the historian would be able to transcend the "present" in order to enter the horizon of a "past" epoch.

It was furthermore thought that in so doing, the historian would be able to think using *concepts* and *collective representations* pertinent to the epoch's spirit and thereby "objectively" recreate this historical era.

Nevertheless, Gadamer wishes to show that this ideal of historicism is based on a conception of historical time in terms of a vacuum that has to be *covered* or of a *breach* that is always in need of being bridged. More importantly, such a conception has the further disadvantage that it conceals the productive dimension of historical distance and the living continuity of the multiple elements that become parts of a tradition, in the light of which the *past* is itself always made available.

There is though one more significant dimension of the beneficial consequences of historical distancing Gadamer brings to the fore using an example from the sphere of art, namely that the very act of freeing oneself from the prejudices of the present is premised on the human ability to ecstatically distance oneself from the present. Thus, the work of modern art cannot be really judged aesthetically solely from the perspective of the present and the prejudices that in Gadamer's view conceal its authentic or inauthentic qualities, but has rather to be looked from the wider perspective of the whole history of art.

Tradition in this case functions as the indispensable element that effaces—even if momentarily—the relations of the present, and which makes therefore possible the transition to the universal (see Gadamer, 1998: 127). In this

manner temporality reveals itself as the precondition of universality and as the condition providing us with the criterion of demarcating between confining and productive prejudices, or as Gadamer inventively puts it between prejudices enlightening and prejudices blinding us. It is this thus *historical distancing* that makes possible the distinction between true and false prejudices thereby grounding the critical functioning of hermeneutic philosophy (Gadamer, 1998: 128).

It is furthermore exactly this historical distancing that informs Gadamer's own reflections on the discrediting of prejudice by the Enlightenment, which he foregrounds by a brief exposition of the history of the concept of prejudice.

Prejudice as a juridical expression means in German a "provisional legal verdict", while the French *préjudice* and the Latin *praejudicium* may mean "disadvantage", "harm", "adverse effect", but these negative significations are for Gadamer derivative of the positive validity attributed to the "value of the provisional decision as a prejudgement, like that of any precedent" (T&M: 270). Gadamer somewhat unsurprisingly links the modern conception of prejudice with one of the great forerunners of the Enlightenment, Descartes, and his making *doubt* the pivotal methodological principle for both philosophy and science.

Furthermore if subjected to closer scrutiny the Enlightenment doctrine of prejudice is said to disclose a distinction between prejudice resulting from human authority and prejudice resulting from overhastiness.

Apparently, this distinction concerns the origin of prejudice, which is traced respectively either outside oneself in persons or institutions endowed with authority or in oneself.

Sapere aude, Kant's formulation of the "maxim" informing the actions of the "enlightened" consciousness is seen by Gadamer as being primarily –though not exclusively- directed against the dimension of prejudice that is linked with alien, institutional authority (T&M: 271).

Despite the fact that not all versions of the European Enlightenment can be said to promulgate what are for Gadamer the "extremes" of "free thinking" and "atheism" as in "England or France", the Enlightenment's prejudice against prejudice is rightly seen as primarily directed against the authority of the Bible and of scholastic philosophy. Even in the case of the Reformation movement and the theology it produced and where the Bible was still seen as the canonical text *par excellence*, it could be said that it champions a purification of the texts from dogmatic interpretations, and thus it demands "to understand tradition correctly- i.e. rationally and without prejudice". This move entails the treatment of the Bible like every other text as a historical document the truthfulness or falsity of which can be asserted only with recourse to rational principles and it therefore establishes the acceptance of the authority of reason over that of tradition (T&M: 272). Nevertheless the most important outcome of Gadamer's intricate and detailed elaborations on the issue concerns his persuasive argument that Romanticism shared the fundamental premises of the Enlightenment, the values of which it simply attempted to reverse.

Gadamer traces the affinity between the rival philosophical movements especially in Romanticism's adopting –even if in a negative manner- the view of

universal history in terms of a progressive supersession of myth by reason. As already hinted in relation to the concept of disenchantment and irrespectively of the positive or negative evaluation attributed to it, this schema acquires its validity by conforming to what presents itself as the self-evident presupposition of the "progressive retreat of magic in the world".

Within the boundaries of the Romantic movement the acceptance of this world-historical schema acquires the guise of a longing for the restoration of the mythical, a nostalgia for the bygone simply for the sake of its being ancient, which nevertheless reinforces the abstract contrast between myth and reason (T&M: 273). Gadamer rightly claims that the imagery of a mysterious, darkened, collective mythical consciousness that allegedly preceded the emergence or lightning of thought is equally abstract and dogmatic as the very conception of a state of perfect enlightenment or of absolute knowledge.

Thus, what can be termed "mythical consciousness" is for the thinker "still knowledge" while if this consciousness "knows about divine powers" then we could confer that it has already differentiated *itself* from mere "trembling" before power. Mythical consciousness thus can be said to have some sort of knowledge "about itself", while in this knowledge of itself "it is no longer simply outside itself" (T&M: 274).

It should not escape our attention that at this point Gadamer feels the need to define his own position with reference to Adorno and Horkheimer's argument concerning an inevitable relapse to the mythical characteristic of instrumental and supposedly enlightened reason in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. It is quite interesting to note that although Gadamer states he

is in agreement with the main thrust of their analysis he still makes some room for disagreement.

Gadamer's objection concerns the application of sociological categories, such as the category of the "*bourgeois* to Odysseus", which the philosopher regards as "a failure of historical reflection, if not, indeed a confusion of Homer with Johan Heinrich Voss [author of the standard German translation of Homer], who had already been criticized by Goethe"¹⁸⁶ (T&M: 274, n. 198). Gadamer is also quick to identify the ways in which this schema has informed various social and political philosophies, as in the case of Marx where a "kind of relic of natural law" is said to limit "the validity of his socio-economic theory of class-struggle", or in the case of Rousseau's postulation of a society where the division of labour and private property have not yet been introduced.

¹⁸⁶ Arguably, the schema of the abstract antithesis between myth and reason is so deeply rooted in modern consciousness that it is not completely shaken off even in the case of critical accounts that explicitly attempted to ascend beyond the confines of the Enlightenment and of Romanticism. In addition to Gadamer's point it can be thus said of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* that despite its demolishing critical power against both the process of the Enlightenment and the "re-enchantment" it inevitably creates, this collection of articles is still characterised by an antithesis between *myth* and *reason* and by an extreme *enmity* towards both the *mythical* and the *instrumental* dimension of reason. Certainly in this case, the schema discussed above is given a new twist and *myth* is seen from the outset as contaminated by *reason* and vice versa, or as the authors boldly put it "myth is already enlightenment; and enlightenment reverts to mythology" (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1986: xvi). It has already been mentioned above that Odysseus, the central figure of Homer's epic, "one of the earlier testimonies of Western Bourgeois civilization" according to the authors (Loc. Cit), is also seen as the prototype of the modern *bourgeois*. It would not be a mere exaggeration if in addition to Gadamer's remarks regarding the inappropriate use of modern sociological categories it was noted that Adorno and Horkheimer's reading exemplifies yet another *anachronism* in that in effect it traces in the Homeric narrative a quite modern -if not the specifically Hegelian- concept of *cunning*. This argument rests mainly on the tacit assumption that *cunning* is to be interpreted even in the Odyssey as "defiance in a rational form" (Ibid: 59). Furthermore, Odysseus' introducing himself to Polyphemus using the name "nobody" is interpreted as *trickery* performed by the sovereign "subject" against the "savage" who is not yet constituted as a self, and ultimately as a disposition towards the *manipulation of nature*. It is true, that this argument is sustained by a quite interesting linguistic observation regarding the similar sound -and the possible common root- between Odysseus and udeis (ουδείς), the Greek word for nobody (Ibid: 67-68), and it is a shame that the authors did not attempt a similar semantic interpretation also in the case of Polyphemus, whose name is a quite straightforward combination of the words πολῦ ("many") and φημί (believe, make known, make manifest, etc). It is equally true though that the schema in question is reproduced -even if in a more refined manner- in the guise of an antithesis between pseudo-clarity, pseudo-individuation and myth on the one hand and *reason proper* on the other hand. This tension arguably characterises even later developments within critical theory, and is especially traceable in Habermas' ideal of "rational", "undistorted communication".

Certainly, the postulation of an incorrupt "state of nature" is characteristic of both Marx and Engels' meditations on history¹⁸⁷ and it arguably becomes even more rigid in Engels' own "scientific" –and oddly enough– anthropologically informed exposition of capitalism as the product of a long historical process of progressive divisions of labour¹⁸⁸ and the establishment of the legal apparatus consolidating and legitimising the respective relations of production.

Engels' account in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, published after Marx's death has often been seen as a transgression from the canon of Marx's thought, although it ironically played some role in the shaping of what was later conceived to be Marxist "orthodoxy". The distinctive quality of this account, which is of interest for the present work –a quality furthermore characterising some of Marx's own works –see e.g. his posthumous *Pre-capitalist Formations*– is that it provides Marxism with an unlikely bridge with *Romanticism*, by sharing with this current of thought the distinctively Romantic motif of "innocence", "projected" now to the state of being of "primitive" peoples.

It has to be remarked that I am neither concerned with the validity of Marx and Engels' conception of universal history, and certainly nor with a

¹⁸⁷ There is though in Marx and Engels (1970: 57) also a recognition of *tradition* as a constituent element of history, albeit one that is *misinterpreted* by Hegel's speculative philosophy. *History* is thus seen as "a succession of the separate generations, each of which exploits the materials, the capital funds, the productive forces handed down to it by all preceding generations, and thus, on the one hand continues the traditional activity in completely changed circumstances and, on the other, modifies the old circumstances with a completely changed activity. This can be speculatively distorted so that later history is made the goal of earlier history".

¹⁸⁸ The division of labour is seen by Marx and Engels (1970: 51-52) as originating in a "natural" manner in sexual activity, while it is seen as attaining maturity in the division between *material* and *mental* labour on which all the allegedly *ideological* constructions are based. Interestingly, the development of religion and the emergence of *priesthood* are seen as the first expression of *false consciousness*, since they signify the capacity of consciousness to "emancipate itself from the world and to proceed to the formation of 'pure' theory, theology, philosophy, ethics, etc". It goes without saying that this emancipation is for Marx and

systematic exposition of their quite complex account of social change. My sole intention is rather by expanding on Gadamer's meditations on the issue, to show how their account is informed by the central imagery of the enlightenment. Furthermore, the antithesis between myth and reason far from being exhausted in a "realist" representation of history, acquires a symbolic character traceable in Lukács' assumption that "Marx and Engels gained a vantage point from which they could settle accounts with all mythologies". Lukács (1971: 18) refers in this context to "conceptual mythologies" that in his opinion point always to the "failure to understand a fundamental condition of human existence" while in a typically Marxist fashion he sees Hegel's *absolute spirit* as being "the last of these grandiose mythologies".

Indeed Lukács' formulations are of specific interest in that he is still quite convinced about the enlightening powers of historical criticism¹⁸⁹, while his elaborations on class-consciousness are permeated by the belief in the possibility of the attainment of a state of complete clarity. This belief is perhaps best exemplified in his polemics against the historical school and especially against Ranke's dictum that "every age is *equally close to God*", which Lukács treats as ultimately being antithetical to the process of "historical development" (Ibid: 48).

The tension between myth and reason postulated by the Enlightenment acquires in Lukács' thought the form of an impasse between myth viewed as

Engels both *false* and *contradictory* with regard to the "reality" of "social relations", because "existing social relations have come into contradiction with existing forces of production" (Ibid: 52).

¹⁸⁹ The following passage is quite revealing in this respect: "This [i.e. Marx's] critical philosophy implies above all historical criticism. It dissolves the rigid, unhistorical, natural appearance of social institutions; it reveals their historical origins and shows therefore that they are subject to history in every respect including historical decline" (Lukács, 1971: 47).

deception or even self-deceit¹⁹⁰ and the potentiality for the attainment of an enlightened, collective consciousness. This schema is best exemplified in the contrast drawn between the "tragic dialectics of the bourgeoisie", i.e. of the bourgeoisie's inability to hinder its self-destruction dictated by the very necessity of the world historical process by way of the semi-conscious pursuing of its interests¹⁹¹, and the proletariat's historical task to "*transform society consciously*" (Ibid: 65, 71). The ideological distortions of any class-bound consciousness and especially of the *bourgeoisie* are furthermore explicated in a twofold manner, both with recourse to the impasse between the interests of the bourgeoisie and those of society as a whole and to the impossibility to realise the "insoluble contradictions" that the bourgeoisie should according to theory develop "at the very zenith of its powers" (Ibid: 61).

On the one hand, the introduction of the concept of a class-bound consciousness introduces a strong element of absolute historicity, which is furthermore reinforced by the invocation of "a class-conditioned *unconsciousness*" of one's own "socio-historical and economic condition". This is at the same time a challenging and a confining¹⁹² – especially if contrasted to

¹⁹⁰ It is important to note that this self-deception is partly attributed to the ethical dilemmas the bourgeois face in pursuing their economic goals and which is seen as *indispensable* to the bourgeoisie. It follows that the false consciousness of the bourgeoisie is understood as the result of the need to "suppress their own moral feelings in order to be able to support with a good conscience an economic system that serves only their own interests". Moreover, the "ideological history of the bourgeoisie" is defined as "*nothing but a desperate resistance to every insight into the true nature of the society it had created and thus to a real understanding of its class situation*" (Lukács, 1971: 66).

¹⁹¹ Thus, although capitalism is seen as "revolutionary par excellence" a limitation is postulated regarding the "objectivity" of the class consciousness it generates and therefore the "*fact that it must necessarily remain in ignorance of the objective economic limitations of its own system expresses itself as an internal, dialectical contradiction in its class consciousness*". The class-consciousness of the bourgeoisie is therefore said to be formally "geared to economic consciousness" and the product of the "*irreconcilable antagonism between ideology and economic base*", or between "the stereotyped individual of capitalism, and the 'natural' and inevitable process of development, i.e. the process not subject to consciousness (Lukács, 1971: 64).

¹⁹² This conception is arguably a one-dimensional, *negative* representation of the unconscious as the product of deceit or of lack of clarity, which furthermore seems to suggest that a complete elimination, or

Castoriadis' formulation on the issue- conception of the *unconscious*, since the latter is theorised as "a definite structural relation" and is therefore deprived of any dimension of indeterminacy (Ibid: 52). In consonance with Marx and Engels¹⁹³, Lukács (Ibid: 80) regards the formation of the proletariat's class-consciousness as a task to be performed in stages along the unfolding of an "external" struggle against the bourgeoisie and an "internal" one against *itself*, viz. against the "devastating and degrading effects of the capitalist system upon its class consciousness".

Thus, the problematic status of the very possibility of a transcendence of the socio-historical contingencies that are in theory inextricably linked with class-membership are again resolved with recourse to Marx and Engels' celebrated definition of the proletariat as being at the same time a class and the cancellation of class. It is in this sense then that Lukács is able to insist - arguably against the grain of the main thrust of his interpretation of class-consciousness - that "the proletariat is to be distinguished from other classes by the fact that it goes beyond the contingencies of history"¹⁹⁴.

more precisely a complete transformation of the unconscious is possible. Although the shortcomings of such a conception might well be attributed to the Marxist ideal of absolute transparency, one cannot but point to the fact that within the Marxist tradition Castoriadis' conception of the unconscious presents itself as distinctively superior in attributing *creative* powers to the unconscious and in arguing as a consequence that the elimination of the unconscious as unthinkable.

¹⁹³ Thus Marx and Engels (1970: 51) understand the phenomenon of consciousness as being a "social product" from the "beginning" of history, while they emphatically argue that it "remains so as long as men exist at all". It is important to note that consciousness is seen as gradually developing, from a first stage where it is a concurrent, though immediate consciousness of nature and other human beings. This stage is furthermore imagined as *animalistic* as indicated by the term "herd consciousness" attributed to it, while the authors (loc. Cit) maintain that at this point "man is only distinguished from sheep by the fact that with him consciousness takes the place of instinct or that the instinct is a conscious one".

¹⁹⁴ It is well known- although hardly feasible- that Lukács (1971: 70-71) treats the "relationship between class consciousness and class situation" as being "very simple" recognising at the same time grave difficulties only in regard of the proletariat's practical struggle to "realise this consciousness". It is also of great importance to note that since revolutionary classes in earlier societies are seen as having acted mainly *unconsciously* i.e. without any understanding concerning the alleged "discrepancy between their own class consciousness and the objective economic set-up", the enactment of historical change on their part is seen as subjectively easier compared to the proletariat's historical mission to consciously transform society.

More importantly, it seems feasible to suggest that in Lukács' case the fully developed class-consciousness of the proletariat is thought as the apex of the enlightened consciousness. This can be derived from Lukács' attempt to show how the proletariat is the potentially *conscious author* of socio-historical change and it is arguably reinforced by his view that the so-called "vulgar Marxists" by disregarding this "central point of view" in their adoption of a "petty Realpolitik" allegedly "*place themselves on the level of consciousness of the bourgeoisie*" (Ibid: 68). Gadamer's elusive reference to Lukács' elaborations on class-consciousness (see T&M: 274, n.200) makes it impossible to discern his own, systematically exposed interpretation of Lukács.

In any case, with regard to the wider *problematic* of Marxism, Gadamer is not only able to identify an unlikely convergence between the "revolutionary"¹⁹⁵ and the "conservative", but he also reminds his readers that the "illusory nature" of the postulation of an incorruptible and allegedly "natural" state of affairs is brilliantly demonstrated by Plato almost two millennia before the advent of modernity "in his ironic account of a state of nature in the third book of the *Republic* (T&M: 274-275).

Importantly, this added difficulty is seen—in a quite convenient manner regarding the orientation of political struggle—as resulting to the necessary development of "a dialectical contradiction between its immediate interests and its long-term objectives, and between the discrete factors and the whole". In any case though, it has to be remarked that this conception of a break with what could be termed the "unconscious mechanics" of history attributed to the proletariat does not entail that it is conceived as entirely free from socio-historical determination and consequently the proletariat "as the product of capitalism" is seen as "necessarily" being "subject to the modes of existence of its creator", namely to "inhumanity and reification" (Ibid: 76).

¹⁹⁵ I deliberately use here the terms employed in the *Communist Manifesto* to characterise the proletariat and the bourgeoisie respectively: "Of all the classes that stand face to face with the bourgeoisie today, the proletariat alone is a really revolutionary class. The other classes decay and finally disappear in the face of the modern industry...The lower middle class, the small manufacturer, the shopkeeper...are therefore not revolutionary, but conservative. Nay more, they are reactionary, for they try to roll back the wheel of history" (Marx & Engels, 1998: 10).

Turning his gaze to the Romantic movement, Gadamer is moreover able to identify another major contribution of this philosophical tradition in its having given birth to a specific mode of historiography, namely to the "historical school".

This observation really brings us to the crux of the matter, since by constructing genealogies and paying heed to paradoxical alliances the thinker wishes to make thematic that which could be called the problem of sovereignty, rupture, heteronomy, and preservation. The singular tense is deliberately used above, since in Gadamer's view the "individual" instances of the problem form a wider, interconnected whole, which could ultimately be addressed from the perspective of the antithesis between tradition and reason as elaborated above. Two things are quite important in regard of Gadamer's observations on the problem of authority.

First, if authority is in the context of the Enlightenment seen as synonymous with the almost dictatorial, coercive, operation of traditional political institutions it then follows that tradition is primarily conceived as deprived of, or even antithetical from, reason. It goes without saying that from this perspective Romanticism's defence of tradition did not really succeed in disentangling the notion of tradition from that of blind authority.

The second observation concerns the postulation of the Enlightenment according to which individual and collective maturity are conceivable in terms of a complete rupture with, and liberation from, tradition.

At that point it is important to observe that this identification of modernity with "reason" and historical "rupture" and the resultant identification of tradition with "repetition", "superstition", and "coercion" is not the exclusive "privilege" of

political-philosophical accounts, nor is Marxism its only heir and interpreter. Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to fully assess the impact that the antithesis between reason and tradition had in the whole range of the social sciences, it should be noted in brief that it has permeated sociological accounts in the most unexpected ways.

A specific instance of this indirect influence can be arguably traced in Weber's development of the ideal-types¹⁹⁶ of social action, which despite its merits moves exactly within the spectrum defined by the limit-cases of "reason" and "custom".

Indeed, Weber (1978: 28) defines social action as *rational* in the sense of exemplifying the employment of "*appropriate means to a given end* (*'zweckrational'*)" as an instance where the "agent" may use one's expectations concerning the "behaviour of external objects and other human beings as 'conditions' or 'means' to achieve" one's own "rationally pursued and calculated purposes".

At the same time he sees *traditional* behaviour as the "expression of a settled custom", while in an even clearer formulation of this distinction he maintains that *rational* action is "*neither affectively determined...nor traditional*" (Weber, 1978: 29).

It is well known that Weber was -undeservedly in my opinion- criticised for this definition of rational action, and this is a "critical" path I certainly do not intend to follow. I think that the real challenge is not to accuse Weber for devising his

¹⁹⁶ Although it is not my intention to assess here the validity of the criticisms raised by Gadamer against Weber's championing of the notion of "value-free inquiry", it has to be observed that one of the problems Gadamer (T&M: 561) identifies, namely "the blind decisionism concerning ultimate ends that Max Weber propagated" is not only "unsatisfactory" with regard to the scope and aims of the social sciences, but it actually "prejudices" – in the hermeneutic sense- the whole construction of the ideal-types of social action.

ideal types from the perspective of an *instrumental* understanding of *rationality*¹⁹⁷, but rather to extricate an understanding of tradition implied therein.

Thus, behaviour which is traditional "in the strong sense" lies for Weber "like purely reactive imitation...often beyond the boundary marking of the area that can in general be called 'meaningful' action", since it is often "simply a dull reaction to accustomed stimuli", although the agent's "conscious awareness of the relation to custom may vary both in degree and meaning" (1978: 28).

The main implication that could be drawn from this presentation of traditional action does not really concern social action, but it rather discloses a conception of tradition as a fundamentally unreflective, almost mechanical state of affairs. Arguably, the fact that Weber is in this context simply occupied with devising the ideal types of *social action* under conditions of modernity and that he consequently is fully aware of the traditional, affective, or even irrational

¹⁹⁷ Habermas (1984: 280 ff) seems to raise this kind of objection, especially in his discussion of the "official typology of action" based on Schluchter's interpretation of Weber's types of social action. Habermas maintains that Weber "chooses purposive-rational action as the reference point of his typology", while "purposive activity" is defined as the "rationality of means and ends" and is seen as obstructing Weber from considering "different kinds of reflexive relations of action orientations and thus also additional aspects under which actions can be rationalised" (Ibid: 280-281). Habermas (Loc. Cit) is nevertheless quite right in arguing that because of Weber's attempt to clarify different aspects or degrees of rationality, "*traditional action* follows as a residual category that is not further determined". The main implication of this omission is in Habermas' opinion that Weber ultimately fails to carry through the consequences of the differentiation between *rational* and *tradition-bound consensus*. The main reason for this shortcoming is –always according to Habermas– Weber's narrow understanding of "rational agreement", which is based on "the model of arrangements among subjects of private law". Had this not prejudiced Weber's perspective, Habermas (1984: 284- emphasis added) suggests, he would not have failed to realise "that action in *society*...is distinguished from action in *community* not through the purposive-rational action orientations of the participants, but through the *higher, post conventional stage of moral-practical rationality*". Now, although the merits of this critique are hardly disputable, one cannot fail to detect in Habermas' account a reproduction of the tension between *tradition* and *reason*, together with a strong notion of *breach* characterising the passage from pre-modern to modern social formations implied in the postulated tension between *community* and *society*. Apart from being simply reminiscent of Tönnies' classic work, this tension is in the case of Habermas apparently accompanied by strong moral overtones, especially since Habermas attributes a higher moral standpoint to *praxis* taking place in the context of modern *societies*. This deep-rooted conviction leads Habermas to the conclusion that an "ethics of

influences on the agent does not really prevent him from adopting and reproducing the antithetical schema "reason vs. tradition" on an *ideal-rational level*.

In any case, the theme of the persistence of traditional elements is also quite important in relation to Gadamer's own attempt at a renewal of the question concerning the meaning of tradition. It could therefore be said that Gadamer's reflections on tradition are premised on the demonstration of the impossibility of a complete liberation from tradition. This explains why although attempting to guard himself against a relapse to "traditionalism" and in consonance with the Romantics, Gadamer sees in tradition the veritable "ground" of the force and validity of morals (T&M: 280-281).

This does not mean that Gadamer would like to subscribe to the Romantic quest for the "growth of traditions", which he repudiates as being a mere reversal of the enlightened preoccupation with reason. It is therefore important to note that although Gadamer does not wish to refute the normative claims of reason he still senses the impossibility of maintaining an a-historical or an extra temporal conception of reason, as it becomes apparent in his *rejection* of an alleged unconditional antithesis between tradition and reason (T&M: 281). Indeed, the human sciences are for Gadamer the disciplines that are in principle capable of giving tradition its full value since it is there that research cannot regard itself as being in "absolute antithesis" to the very manner in which individual human beings relate to the "past".

Thus, the abandonment of the distinction between "*tradition and historical research, between history and the knowledge of it*" is placed at the centre of

responsibility" is only viable under conditions of modernity, while community is seen as exclusively

historical hermeneutics (T&M: 282). This move signifies nothing but the acceptance of the essentially finite, or conditioned perspective, from which the historical can be addressed and theorised, as expressed by Gadamer's argument that historical research is "carried along by the historical movement of life itself and cannot be understood teleologically in terms of the object into which it is inquiring" (T&M: 285).

The correct meaning of the passage that has intrigued Gadamer's critics, namely the rejection of the existence of an "object in itself" as the legitimate subject matter of the historical sciences becomes now more accessible. Instead of denying the tangibility or the "reality" of historical phenomena or the "accessibility" of the *past* –or of any other dimension of historical time¹⁹⁸– this refutation signifies –as indicated above– a closer proximity between the mode of historical existence peculiar to the individual human being and the process of historical enquiry.

Thus, if it is possible to describe the "object of the natural sciences" *ideally* as "what would be known in the perfect knowledge of nature" Gadamer maintains that it would be "senseless to speak of a perfect knowledge of history" and thus "of an 'object in itself' toward which research is directed" (T&M: 285).

characterised by an "ethics of conviction".

¹⁹⁸ As will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter in connection with Gadamer's concept of the *fusion of horizons*, and despite his emphasis on the concept of *tradition* that is so easily associated with the ossified *past*, all three *ecstasies* of time are taken into account by the thinker very much in line with Heidegger's elaborations in *Being and Time*.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter I attempted to establish a non-reductive interpretation of Gadamer's historical hermeneutics. The discussion of the experiencing of art was fundamental in our attempt to elucidate and delineate a way of thinking together the phenomena of truth and history that is not confined by the false dichotomy imposed by the Enlightenment between prejudice and reason. It was argued that it is exactly this dichotomy that gives rise to the antithetical schema 'tradition vs. reason', which fundamentally conceals historical experience and action. It was also attempted to free the notion of tradition from the negative connotations it bears within the intellectual tradition of the Enlightenment and to present it in a positive light as the always living 'material' that continually shapes –and is equally shaped by– both thought and praxis. Finally, in this chapter the way was paved for a discussion of Gadamer's celebrated concept of the fusion of horizons' a full assessment of which follows in the next and final chapter of this thesis.

Chapter Four

Horizons, Appropriations, Events

Introductory remarks

In the first part of this chapter Gadamer's thesis on the 'fusion of horizons' is closely examined and largely interpreted as a metaphor aiming at the disclosure of the primordial experience of historical existence. In this respect it is argued that it should be seen as bearing fundamental affinities with Heidegger's elaborations on the nature of language and truth and especially with his understanding of the event of truth in art. The phenomenon of truth made accessible in the work of art is again evoked as a specific –yet fundamental– instance of this 'fusion' and poetic creation is examined as the most convincing indication that conceptual understanding cannot embrace the totality of meaningful significations. More importantly it is argued that the postulated dichotomy between rationality and irrationality distorts the very notion of meaning. The second part of this chapter is a more detailed exploration of the issue of continuity allegedly characterising Gadamer's dialogical model, which is carried through via an assessment of the Gadamer-Derrida debate. Continuity and rupture are therefore made thematic and the chapter duly concludes by tracing *kairological* dimensions in Gadamer's dialogical model. These are furthermore discussed in relation to Heidegger's attempts to break with the western conception of space/time in his *Parmenides*.

4.1 Accessing Historical Time: The Fusion of Horizons

Historical Knowledge is *cognitio ex datis*;
 Rational knowledge is *cognitio ex principiis*.
 However a mode of knowledge may be originally given.
 It is still, in relation to the individual who possesses it,
 Simply historical, if he knows only so much of it as has been given
 To him from outside...whether through immediate experience or
 Narration, or...through instruction.
 (Kant, 1787/1929: 655-656)

This passage from the section on the 'Architectonic' in the *Critique of Pure Reason* underpins Kant's attempt to theorise knowledge in general through the introduction of two pairs of binary oppositions, namely by postulating an antithesis between historical and rational, objective and subjective modes of knowledge. Despite the debatable nature of the distinction, and the particularly problematic assumption that both "rational principles" and "historical facts" are unaffected by historical change and interpretation, this passage expresses a quite important insight, which becomes clearer once the reader follows further Kant's argument.

Thus, in the philosopher's opinion, anyone who has "*learned*" a "system of philosophy" has no more than a "complete *historical* knowledge" of this system since one has only formed one's "mind on another's, and the imitative faculty is not itself productive". This sort of knowledge is therefore according to Kant defective in that it has "not arisen *out of reason*", and although objectively considered it is indeed the product of reason, it is also simply historical from a subjective point of view (Kant, 1787/1929: 656).

It should not have escaped the attention of the reader that although the concepts of tradition and effective historical consciousness have been explicitly

examined in the previous chapter there was almost no explicit reference to the most celebrated of Gadamer's formulations, viz. to his concept of the *fusion of horizons*. This is not only due to the fact that Gadamer himself stresses that the *purpose* of his giving an account of the "formation and fusion of horizons" was to show how historically effective consciousness operates" (T&M: 341) shifting thereby the emphasis from the idea of the *horizon* to the discussion of the problem concerning the alleged mediation between truth and history taking place within this consciousness¹⁹⁹.

The main reason for "delaying" the thematic engagement with this conceptual formulation is that as it is the case with all the celebrated concepts that become "ossified" or "merely historical" in the sense Kant uses the term above, an untimely discussion of the "fusion of horizons" might have hindered our exploration into Gadamer's thought.

Indeed, it could be argued that concepts like "tradition" and "fusion of horizons" quite often operate as catchwords in the very same way that Gadamer described the functioning of the famous dictum "to the things themselves" in the case of Husserl's phenomenology. Nevertheless, having shown that the concept of tradition should be treated as correlative to that of the finitude, or in other words of the historical conditioning of human beings and not as political-ideological bias, the way is paved for a closer examination of the *event* of the fusion of horizons. In effect, it is Gadamer's understanding of tradition and of

¹⁹⁹ Thus the claim of hermeneutics seems according to Gadamer "capable of being met only in the infinity of knowledge, in the thoughtful fusion of the whole tradition with the present. We see it based on the ideal of perfect enlightenment, on the complete limitlessness of our historical horizon...on the omnipresence of the historically knowing spirit", which finds "its justification in Hegel, even if the historians, filled with enthusiasm for experience, preferred to quote Schleiermacher and Wilhelm von Humboldt" (T&M: 341-342).

the effective historical consciousness that arguably shapes the very conceptualisation of this "fusion".

It is important to note once more that Gadamer sees tradition as much more than a "permanent precondition" conditioning human understanding. To the contrary, human beings are rather seen as continually re-producing and re-determining tradition inasmuch as they themselves participate in its "evolution" (T&M: 293). Gadamer wishes to further illuminate this peculiar state of being of tradition by showing how the hermeneutic phenomenon itself is based on the "prejudice" or fore-conception of "*completeness*", which is a fine example of the mode of prejudices that Gadamer understands as "productive".

Thus, in an encounter with a "traditional text" understanding is always guided by the expectation of completeness, not only formally, i.e. regarding the expectation of the expression of a complete meaning, but also in terms of the *truth-claims* contained therein. Like any fore-conception, the prejudice of "completeness" is understood as being grounded on the interpreter's own "prior relation to the subject matter" and it is in this respect that Gadamer is able to defend the position that preconceptions and prejudices are not subject to the whim of the individual consciousness but are rather the direct effect of belonging to a tradition.

What is more, the "element of tradition" in any historical-hermeneutical activity is said to be "fulfilled" in the commonality "of fundamental, enabling prejudices" that make possible the "connection with tradition" through the process of being-addressed by the "traditional text" (T&M: 295).

It has been already remarked that Gadamer sees historical distance as a positive and productive condition of the understanding and references were

made to his treatment of aesthetic experience. Literary and historical experiences are also brought to the fore in the thinker's attempt to further clarify the beneficial workings of "historical distance".

On the one hand, Gadamer underplays the idea that the "temporal distance" between the author and the reader of a literary text is responsible for misunderstandings and misinterpretations, mainly on the grounds that the meaning of a text usually "goes beyond" the intentions and the understanding of its author (T&M: 296).

In a similar manner, the oft-repeated insight of conventional wisdom according to which the passage of time alone is what makes objective historical judgment possible, is given a fresh and interesting interpretation. It would not be inaccurate to claim that Gadamer regards the very conception of "historical distance" as paradoxical, in the same manner that the conception of a hermeneutics of facticity is said to parallel something like the concept of a "wooden iron".

In other words, since facticity signifies the "unshakable resistance that the factual puts up against all grasping and understanding" the conception of a "hermeneutics of facticity" is rightly seen as pointing to the paradoxical manner in which the human Dasein is fundamentally determined and which cannot be adequately grasped with the aid of the notions of consciousness or self-consciousness (Gadamer, 1994: 55).

To develop the analogy further, if facticity and hermeneutics jointly considered point to a certain impenetrability of the Self and to the unattainability of complete self-knowledge, then one could suggest that "historical distance" signifies a similar mode of "resistance" characteristic of the

historical realm. This resistance is perhaps best exemplified in the "fact" that a "relative closure" of a historical event is often required before this event becomes accessible as a whole. It is nevertheless questionable if this characteristic of historical events exhausts their significance and their relationship with the historically effective consciousness. Gadamer actually understands the paradox presented by the historical event as the epistemological counterpart of the old moral question of whether anyone could be called happy before one's death.

Indeed, as the thinker readily acknowledges, although certain sources of error are excluded and some hermeneutic requirements are "automatically fulfilled" when a "historical context has come to be of only historical interest", this is hardly the "end of the hermeneutical problem" (T&M: 298). The thought of something that has become "only historical" signifies the tendency of the historical to show itself as "dead" or "ossified", as irrelevant to the concerns of the "present". At the same time, in pointing to the inevitable "historicity" of the "present" it accentuates the incomplete character of all historical understanding. It is true that one could quite easily put all the emphasis on the notion of *incompleteness* and attempt to philosophically justify or even celebrate it.

Gadamer seems to occasionally move towards this direction, when for example he insists that "real" historical thinking "must take account of its own historicity", or when he points towards the always unfinished work of interpretation (T&M: 298-299).

This tendency is even sharpened in the way that the concept of effective historical consciousness is fashioned, since we are told that reflection on the

essence of humanity's historical being "can never be completely achieved" and that correlatively "*to be historically means that knowledge of oneself can never be complete*" (T&M: 302).

Gadamer is nevertheless far from being content with simply celebrating incompleteness without reintroducing the element of universality, as his modification of the concept of the "horizon" makes plain. This becomes clearer in the attempt to secure the very notion of the horizon from being identified with whimsical and unjustified subjective interpretations, and mere caprice by establishing its dependence to the wider contexts of tradition.

It is therefore important at this point to follow Gadamer's reinterpretation of the concept of the horizon more closely. His first step is to trace in the very concept of *horizon* the indication of the range of vision articulated from "a particular vantage point", a state-of-affairs characterized by what could be termed the determinacy of finitude over thought. In the field of historical understanding, the idea of an horizon is often used to indicate the attempt to bypass the criteria and prejudices of the "present" so as to enable the immersion into the "past", wherefrom the traditionary text or the historical event addresses the historical consciousness. In the first instance this prevalent understanding of horizons in terms of a transposition into the "alien" is in Gadamer's eyes -up to an extent- legitimate, though by no means *adequate* (T&M: 302-303).

Leaving aside the objections against the psychological aspect²⁰⁰ of the conception of this transposition that was considered in the previous chapter, it

²⁰⁰ This does not mean though that Gadamer fails to take into account the *subjective* aspect of this phenomenon. To the contrary, the centrality attributed to the *dialogical process* in Gadamer's thought suggests that the communicative experience of the individual human being -alongside the inter-subjective

has to be said that the main problem Gadamer finds with this model is the postulation of "closed horizons". In effect, the conception of a closed horizon that supposedly "encloses" a culture is according to Gadamer a mere *abstraction* (T&M: 303-304).

It should be reminded that a problem of similar order was identified in chapter two with regard to Castoriadis' conception of "core significations" characterizing specific socio-historical formations. It can be said that Gadamer capitalizes on the fleeting qualities of time in order to show the indeterminacy of the very notion of the horizon. In other words, if following Heidegger one places temporality at the centre of human existence then the main consequence following the postulation of Dasein's radical historicity is the inability to permanently fix a standpoint wherefrom history -both in the personal and the universal sense of the term- is experienced and hence to conceive of a truly "closed" horizon.

Consequently, both the singular human being and the historical horizons humans are immersed in are said to be in a state of constant movement. In the same manner that "past", "present", and "future" are not separated dimensions but *ecstasies* of time, the transposition of historical consciousness into "alien"

experience of *dialogue* that Gadamer attempts to wrest from its being sublated in the conceptual framework of speculative dialectics- occupies a prominent part in Gadamer's construction of the very notion of the "fusion of horizons". This becomes apparent in Gadamer's (1989b: 41) description of the relation between *text*, *interpreter* and *reader*. For indeed, the interpreter tends to "disappear" in the very process of *mediating* between the text and the reader, but in Gadamer's eyes this is not a disappearance in any *negative* sense, but it rather signifies the overcoming of "what is alienating in the text". It therefore signals an "entering into communication", which happens in "a way that the tension between the horizon of the text and the horizon of the reader is dissolved". Gadamer stresses that he has called this process "a *fusion of horizons* (*Horizontverschmelzung*)", in other words the process where the "separated horizons, like the different standpoints, merge with each other". In this context it should be also pointed out that Gadamer (1985/1989b: 110) sees his own philosophy in terms of a "hermeneutic turn toward *conversation*" as a move beyond the "dialectic of German idealism...to Platonic dialectic", as a "recollection" that is not entirely dependent on the individual but also "to 'the spirit that would like to unite us'-we who are a

historical horizons does not merely imply "passing into alien worlds unconnected in any way with our own". For Gadamer, this transposition rather reveals the fundamental dimension of the historical horizon, namely that it consists a single horizon, which in its movement embraces the past and the present, whilst keeping itself open to the future (T&M: 304).

It is thus altogether questionable whether it is proper to speak of a "fusion of horizons" characterizing the historically effective consciousness and not of a "fusion of the ecstasies of time" within a single historical horizon. How else could one interpret the emphatic statement that "*understanding is always the fusion of these horizons supposedly existing by themselves*" (T&M: 306)?

Indeed Gadamer acknowledges that the term "fusion of horizons" is preferable than that of the "formation of one horizon" mainly because the former discloses more explicitly the hermeneutic situation. To be more precise, the concept of the "fusion of horizons" has the advantage of explicitly recognizing that understanding "becomes a scholarly task only under special circumstances" and that there is an acknowledged tension between the *text* -or the historical event- and the *present*.

Bringing this tension to the fore and projecting a horizon that is "different from the horizon of the present" is in Gadamer's view the main task of the hermeneutic approach. What is more, the regulated enactment of the fusion of the horizons of the "past" and the "present", the simultaneous process of projecting and superseding is the postulated task of the historically effected consciousness, while being closely bound with the central problem of hermeneutics, that being the problem of application (T&M: 306-307).

conversation". We can see also how being in a conversation "means to be beyond oneself, to think with the

Certainly the problem of application is in Gadamer's philosophy tightly bound with the attribution of primacy to language, and with the fashioning of a philosophical position that is the outcome of a bold attempt to mediate the notoriously incompatible accounts of Hegel and Kierkegaard. On the one hand language is brought to the centre of philosophical reflection as a result of Gadamer's aim to reclaim the exemplarity of theological and legal hermeneutics along with that of philological hermeneutics in regard of the need to recognize "application as an integral element of all understanding" (T&M: 308).

Similarly, and with reference to a specific instance of application, viz. aesthetic non-differentiation, Gadamer attempts to combine Hegel's concept of a "religion of art" with Kierkegaard's notion of "contemporaneity", in order to establish the hermeneutic dimension of the "mediation between past and present" (T&M: 573).

More specifically, art is used by the philosopher to show that meaning cannot be exhausted by conceptual understanding as idealist philosophy famously claimed. Thus, contemporaneity - the strict religious referent that is the hallmark of Kierkegaard's philosophy being carefully removed- is interpreted not as temporal "omnipresence", but as "total mediation" or "immediate coincidence". At the same time, and in full knowledge of the "fact" that even the use of the term mediation might seem as an insult to the essentially anti-speculative Kierkegaardian reflection, Gadamer also makes use of Hegel's insight concerning the *past* character of all art in an attempt to grasp the paradoxical nature the work of art, which achieves "aesthetic simultaneity" exactly by being "absorbed by historical, rememorative consciousness".

other and to come back to oneself as if to another".

This realization enables Gadamer to devise the concept of aesthetic non-differentiation to "distinguish the *real* experience of art— which does not experience art" *qua art*, from the so-called "aesthetic consciousness" and from the pseudo-religious idolization²⁰¹ of art that the latter entails. Gadamer aspires to establish a conception of art which goes beyond the "false dichotomy" between either the postulation that art is "contemporary with all times", or as a "way of attaining culture through the experience of history" (T&M: 572-573).

It is regrettable that in this context Gadamer gives his readers only a hint concerning the recognition of the "fundamental pastness of the work of art" in Walter Benjamin's concept of the *aura* of the work of art (T&M: 573).

There are indeed striking similarities between Gadamer's thought concerning the embedding of truth in the context of a historical tradition and Benjamin's reflections on "historical objects" in general, and of the work of art. Firstly, Benjamin defines the *aura* of a historical object in terms of distance, by drawing an interesting parallel with the way the term "aura" is understood with reference to "natural objects".

It is of crucial importance that mechanical reproduction is linked with the "desire of contemporary masses to bring things 'closer' spatially and humanly" and hence overcome *the* uniqueness of "every reality by accepting its reproduction". Leaving aside the objections concerning Benjamin's postulation of new political functions of the work of art in the age of mechanical

²⁰¹ Walter Benjamin (1992: 218) expresses a similar concern in stating that "*l'art pour l'art*" is but a "negative theology in the form of the idea of 'pure' art, which...denied any social function of art". It has to be observed though that this *theological turn* is seen as the product of the *crisis* following the "advent of the first truly revolutionary means of reproduction". Gadamer seems to endorse the first part of Benjamin's argument in speaking of the "apotheosis of art into the religion of culture, symptomatic of the bourgeois period". Despite that, Gadamer wishes to show that "the hermeneutic constitution of the unity of the work of art is *invariant* among all the social alterations of the art industry" and that consequently, far

reproduction that Gadamer seems to share with Adorno,²⁰² it is difficult to miss the affinities²⁰³ between the thinkers in Benjamin's identifying the uniqueness of the work of art with "its being imbedded in the fabric of tradition".

More importantly, this "tradition" is not understood as something "dead" and "ossified" but as being itself "thoroughly alive and extremely changeable" (Benjamin, 1992: 216-217). To be sure, Gadamer's linking the experiencing of art with history and truth has its precedent in Heidegger's philosophy and is particularly reminiscent of the latter's meditations on the "origin of the work of art". Given that Heidegger's hermeneutic-phenomenological project in *Being and Time* was seen as limited by forms of being that are not strictly speaking historical, like the supposedly timeless mathematical forms, the equally timeless realm of nature with its "unending cycles" and the realm of art that "spans all historical distances", Heidegger's attempt to "deal with the work of

form being "a tool of the socio-political will", art "documents a social reality only when it is really art, and not when it is used as an instrument" (T&M: 579- emphasis added).

²⁰² At least this is the impression given by the enigmatic "but" that links the first, more "positive" part with the remaining part of Gadamer's brief reference to Benjamin as the following extract makes plain: "But he [Benjamin] proclaims a new political function for the work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction, one which completely revolutionizes the meaning of art and against which Theodor Adorno raises pertinent objections in his *Aesthetic Theory*" (T&M: 573, n.32).

²⁰³ The fundamental difference between the two approaches is of course Benjamin's incorporation of a Marxist perspective, which does not really square with Gadamer's liberalism. One has to recognise alongside Hannah Arendt that Marxism, as well as Zionism were no more than *paths* that Benjamin kept open not because he was interested in their "positive" aspects, but because they offered him a vehicle for carrying out the "negative" task of shaking off the "illusions" of bourgeois society (Arendt, 1992: 38-39). Nevertheless, the essay on the work of art bears strong Marxist connotations in the same manner that the "Theses on the Philosophy of History" exemplify elements of the Jewish tradition, or at least explicit biblical *themes*. As far as Marxism is concerned, one can for example refer to the need Benjamin felt to situate his text with regard to the canonical Marxist framework of economic base and cultural superstructure and thereby to establish the legitimacy of an inquiry into the "developmental tendencies of art under present [i.e. capitalist] conditions of production", on the grounds that the dialectics between the base and the superstructure are "no less noticeable in the superstructure than in the economy" (Benjamin, 1992: 212). This certainly does not suggest that Benjamin's thought suffered from the same shortcomings as "historical materialism", of which he was a very acute critic as his first "thesis on the philosophy of history" clearly shows: "The story is told of an automaton constructed in such a way that it could play a winning game of chess...A puppet in Turkish attire and with a hookah in its mouth sat before a chessboard placed on a large table...a little hunchback who was an expert chess player...guided the puppet's hand by means of strings. One can imagine the philosophical counterpart to this device. *The puppet called*

art" in several addresses during 1936 came as a surprise to many. The phenomena of the "unconscious, the number, the dream, the sway of nature, the miracle of art", were all seen as existing "only in the periphery of Dasein" and thus as comprehensible only as "limiting concepts", i.e. as concepts exemplifying the limits of Dasein's *historicality* (Gadamer, 1994: 98).

Despite that, Heidegger's work on the phenomenon of art seems to have caused a "philosophical sensation" long before its publication in 1950 when it became available to the general public. This sensation might be attributed to the fact that this new thought-experiment entailed a "startling new conceptuality that boldly emerged in connection with this topic", and which is best exemplified in the coining of the earth as a counter-concept to the -familiar from *Being and Time*- concept of the world (Gadamer, 1994: 98-99).

The peculiar relationship between art and the historical is made manifest in Benjamin's (1992: 214) linking of the "origin" of the work of art with the very concept of authenticity and his contention concerning the socio-historical context that is embodied in the "original" but necessarily absent in the reproduced copy. Actually this insight into the disclosure of a whole historical epoch characteristic of the work of art can serve as a point of departure for a fruitful dialogue with Heidegger and Gadamer's elaborations²⁰⁴ on the issue.

'historical materialism' is to win all the time. It can easily be a match for anyone if it enlists the services of theology, which today, as we know, is wizened and has to be out of sight" (Benjamin, 1992: 245).

²⁰⁴ See for example Heidegger's critical remarks on how works of art become commodified and therefore torn from their native context and how this process involves apart from the "market", several "modern" institutions, like museums, universities, professional bodies, etc. "Official agencies", Heidegger observes, "assume the care and maintenance of works. Connoisseurs and critics busy themselves with them. Art dealers supply the market. Art-historical study makes the works the object of a science". Yet the question persists: "in all this busy activity do we encounter the work itself"? Heidegger's answer is predictably a negative one and the "Aegina sculptures in the Munich collection", or "Sophocles' *Antigone* in the best critical edition", are seen as torn from their "native" historical world. It is nevertheless important to note that the philosopher sees this "perishing of the historical world" that accompanies the work of art as *inevitable* even in the case where there is a conscious attempt to "cancel or avoid such displacement", as

Let us first consider Benjamin's (1992: 217) insight that art was originated "in the service of ritual- first the magical, then the religious kind" -which coincides with Gadamer's linking of the 'sacred' with the work the work of art²⁰⁵ in general - in conjunction with Heidegger's unusual identification of the work with what is 'intended' in it. Let us then first turn our gaze to Heidegger's attempt to show how a specific type of work, the Greek temple is not "a portrait" that somehow shows how "the god looks", or in other words that *represents* the divine. Instead Heidegger champions the idea that the work rather "lets the god himself be present and thus is the god himself" (Heidegger, 1975: 43).

There is undoubtedly more to this thought-defying formulation than the intention to merely upset one's readers by reverting to a totemic identification between 'gods' and 'artefacts'. In distancing himself from the prevalent at his times understanding of art as the representation of the beautiful Heidegger wishes to break with the fundamental distinction between *matter* and *form* allegedly characteristic of "western metaphysics", and which he sees as the conceptual schema also operating "*in the greatest variety of ways*" in "*all art theory and aesthetics*" (Heidegger, 1975: 26-27).

In his commentary of Heidegger's essay on art Gadamer offers an account of Heidegger's point of departure in an attempt to clarify what

when one visits say "the Bamberg cathedral on its won square" (Heidegger, 1975: 40-41). This does not entail though that this perished historical world is no longer accessible, since as implied also by the principle of aesthetic non-differentiation devised by Gadamer, "even if every 'work' belongs originally to a context of life that has passed away...[the] relation to the past is, as it were, retained in the work itself" (T&M: 578).

²⁰⁵ It is important to note that first, in Gadamer's view there is always something religious about a work of art, and this "seems decisively proved by the fact that even pure aesthetic consciousness is acquainted with the idea of *profanation*" since it "always perceives the destruction of works of art as a *sacrilege*". Secondly, it should not escape our attention that Gadamer points to the relativity of the distinction between the *sacred* and the *profane* by reminding his readers that "the 'profane' is [originally] the place in front of the sanctuary" and that therefore the concept of the profane "and its cognate, profanation, always

Heidegger had in mind in speaking of the "established" view of the work of art in particular and of the whole domain of "aesthetics" in general. By reminding his readers that in the background of Heidegger's reflection one could trace the Kantian attempt to establish the autonomy of the aesthetic sphere without compromising the claim to its universality by means of the postulation of a "congruity" between the "beauty of nature and the subjectivity of the subject" enacted in the person of the "creative genius", Gadamer (1994: 101) indirectly informs us of the manner in which his own project was developed out of Heidegger's insights.

Gadamer rightly emphasizes that the Kantian conception is premised on the validity of the "natural order that has its ultimate foundation in the theological idea of creation" and that with the disappearance of this context of justification the "grounding of aesthetics led inevitably to a radical subjectification" in the mode of the doctrine of the "freedom of the genius from rules" (Loc. Cit). Undoubtedly, another crucial point of reference for Heidegger's essay is in Gadamer's view Hegel's aesthetics and the attempt to reconcile the subjective with the universal, the finite with the infinite by recognising in art the expression of spirit, which could be grasped in its perfection by philosophy in a conceptual form. To these influences Gadamer adds –albeit in a negative sense– the dominant at the time movement of Neo-Kantianism, against the "prejudices" of which Heidegger is said to have begun his essay by "asking how the work of art is differentiated from a thing" (Ibid: 102).

Jean Beaufret (1970: 434-435) adds a final touch to the canvas by noting the peculiar relationship between Heidegger's reflections on the origin of the work of

presuppose the sacred", while this interplay between the sacred and the profane is said to take place also in

art with what Husserl wrote at the same period about the origin of Geometry. In Beaufret's view a contrast between these two works is essential for an understanding of the degree of Heidegger's departure from Husserl's phenomenology²⁰⁶, and especially of the specific connotations the concept of the *phenomenon* acquires in Heidegger's philosophy. To be sure, both thinkers aimed the "things themselves" albeit in a quite distinctive fashion. The main differentiation that Beaufret is able to identify is then that in the case of Heidegger concealment is a constitutive part of the phenomenon, or that the "peculiar character of a phenomenon is to be essentially the bearer of a *Not* (*Nicht*) which is not exclusively that of a logical negation" (*Ibid.*: 434).

Heidegger is then seen as asking a question not raised by either Husserl or Kant, namely the question concerning *why* the "thing-itself" is "heavily shrouded". Beaufret's argument is that although for Kant and Husserl the "thing-itself" was seen as "shrouded" for the same reason that "two right angles and the sum of the angles of a triangle is not immediately evident", Heidegger was able to demonstrate -following Heraclitus and Schelling- the interrelation of disclosure and concealment, which is best exemplified in Heidegger's conception of *onto-theology*.

It is especially the "onto-theological structure" that for Beaufret is not related to metaphysics in the same manner "as the equality of two right angles is related to the sum of the angles of a triangle" but which essentially points us to what

art (T&M: 150-151)

²⁰⁶ Beaufret (1970) seems to argue that Heidegger's reception in France was widely mediated by a misleading identification of his understanding of phenomenology with Husserl's approach. Although it is beyond the scope of the present work to assess this issue, it has to be remarked that there is a striking similarity between Beaufret's point and Gadamer's criticism of Derrida's perception of Heidegger and especially of Derrida's argument against "the metaphysical concept of *logos*" and against "the logocentrism that is inscribed even in Heidegger's question about Being as a question about the *meaning* of Being". As

has the tendency to "remain unnoticed", viz. to the "undisclosed harmony" of metaphysics itself (Ibid: 435).

At any rate, Heidegger's meditations on art are permeated through and through by the attempt to link artistic creation and experience with the mode of truth (αληθεια) that becomes accessible in *unconcealment* and with the experience of the "historical". On the one hand, the *work-aspect* of the "work of art" is shown to encapsulate the "paths and relations in which birth and death, disaster and blessing, victory and disgrace, endurance and decline acquire the shape of destiny for human being" (see Heidegger, 1975: 42)

This line of thought, with the emphasis it places on *historical belonging* and on the *destiny* of a peoples is reminiscent of the reflections on historicity in *Being and Time* or in the *Introduction to Metaphysics*, while it cannot escape the insertion of the odd "speculative" remark concerning the nation's²⁰⁷ "return to itself for the fulfilment of its vocation" (Loc.cit).

Despite appearances pointing to the contrary, it is doubtful whether this formulation can be treated as ideological through and through, since Heidegger

Gadamer (1985/1989b: 112) emphatically puts it though this is "an odd Heidegger, a Heidegger interpreted back through Husserl; as if speaking consisted merely of prepositional judgements".

²⁰⁷ As observed in the second chapter, the "nation" is often confounded with the "Volk". In fact the same concerns are echoed in Heidegger's so-called "political writings", i.e. in the writings from the period of Heidegger's "involvement" with "politics" and his "partisanship" for National Socialism, although in this context they are vested with a more "militant" tone. Accordingly in an address to the students of Freiburg University entitled "National Socialist Education", Heidegger attempts to refute what he understands as a fundamental claim of Marxism, namely that "the worker" is a "mere object of exploitation" by defining "work" as "well-ordered action that is borne by the responsibility of the individual, the group, and the State and which is thus of service to the Volk". Heidegger wishes to show how mental and manual labour are united in the very concept of work, while the whole discussion is articulated from a perspective which substitutes the concept of the *Volk* for that of the *social class*, as the following lines of his speech show: "Worker and work, as National Socialism understands these words, does not divide into classes, but binds and unites Volksgenossen and the social and occupational groups into the one great will of the State (Heidegger, 1993b: 59).

has elsewhere²⁰⁸ shown the shallowness of common perceptions of what could be termed a "historical mission".

The ways in which this historical vocation is fulfilled in the enactment of history taking place amidst the struggle between the earth and the world are for Heidegger exemplified also in tragedy in the form of a battle between the new and the old gods. This does not mean that this "battle" is explicitly drawn in the linguistic work "originating in the speech of the people", but it is rather cloaked and transformed. After this mutation "the people's saying" is itself transformed and the battle is henceforth fought by "every living word".

What is at stake in this battle? Apparently, Heidegger's poetical effusion boosted by an elusive reference to fragment 53 of Heraclitus sees in the outcome of this battle a *decision* concerning "what is holy and what unholy, what great and what small, what brave and what cowardly, what lofty and what flighty, what master and what slave" (Ibid: 43). What is therefore accomplished by the work is the erection of a world; of this "ever-nonobjective to which we are subject as long as birth and death" hold "us transported into Being". Given that in the hermeneutic phenomenological jargon the "world worlds"²⁰⁹, the work is said to "hold us open to the Open of the world", which Heidegger also

²⁰⁸ See for example the following, quite illuminating remark: "Then the question would be whether man has ever been decisively given over into the realm of decision belonging to his own essence, so that he *shares* in the grounding of his historical essence and *does not merely busy himself with his 'historical missions'*. Then it would be completely doubtful whether we can already know who we are, whether we can know this at all with the present claims of thinking" (Heidegger, 1998c: 75-emphasis added). I think that the tone of the passage, and especially the use of the verb "to busy" that Heidegger often uses to indicate *inauthentic* comportment suggests that when Heidegger speaks of a historical vocation he does not wish to merely replicate the ideological certainties characterising the political struggles of his times.

²⁰⁹ However, Gadamer sees in this strange phraseology a break with the customary and a subsequent placement of language itself in the center of philosophical self-reflection. Already in 1920 "as I myself can testify", writes Gadamer (1985/1989b: 103), "a young thinker- Heidegger to be exact- began to lecture...on what it might mean to say '*es wellet*': it 'worlds'. This was an unprecedented break with the solid and dignified, but at the same time scholasticized, language of metaphysics that had become completely alienated from its own origins".

terms "the self-disclosing openness of the broad paths of the simple and essential decisions in the destiny of an historical people" (*Ibid.*: 44-45, 48).

The "earth" is evidently used as a limiting concept insofar as it exemplifies "self-sheltering and closing off" thereby completing the Heideggerian concept of truth as incessant interplay between concealment and unconcealment, while providing Heidegger with one more chance to attack scientific conceptions of truth and mastery²¹⁰. It is true that Heidegger's poeticising language seems at times strange, which might very well indicate that his thinking "lacks a language" and it thus "often resembles a tormented stammering".

Indeed, with this phrase Gadamer (1994: 25) has successfully epitomized the experience of being confronted with the Heideggerian text. Despite the linguistic obscurity, which occasionally borders with absurdity²¹¹, it could be quite fruitful if some thought was given to the way in which the work of art is said to disclose the "earth as earth", i.e. as essentially "undisclosed and unexplained", as resistant to the manipulative calculations of scientific reason. More importantly it could be asked how the work of art makes manifest in general the "abyss" implied in the very concept of "truth" thought in terms of "unconcealment" (Heidegger, 1975: 51).

²¹⁰ As a phenomenological concept, the Earth is said to shatter "every attempt to penetrate into it" and to cause "every merely calculating importunity upon it to turn into destruction". In an explicit attack against the sciences Heidegger furthermore suggests that this destruction "may herald itself under the appearance of mastery and of progress in the form of technical-scientific objectivation of nature, but this mastery nevertheless remains an impotence of will". It is also important to note that the earth is also seen as the *shelter* upon which "historical man grounds his dwelling in the world" (Heidegger, 1975: 47).

²¹¹ Jaspers (1993: 148-149) for example sees Heidegger's use of language as containing the "seriousness of nihilism with the mystagogy of a magician". Despite this remark, Jaspers is willing to accept that in "the torrent of his language" Heidegger "is occasionally able, in a clandestine and remarkable way, to strike the core of philosophical thought".

It is an established fact that those critical of Heidegger's philosophy regarded his attempt to think the possibility of a modality of truth lying beyond the reach of scientific reason and argumentative logic with great suspicion, or with the unshakable belief that this was a mere hoax²¹². Although these objections have to be taken into account, it is equally important to further reflect on Heidegger's argument by following the example of the Van Gogh's painting depicting a peasant's shoes that Heidegger offers in order to best illustrate his position and to show how it prefigures Gadamer's concept of aesthetic non-differentiation, and the event of truth made generated by the "fusion of horizons".

The main scope of Heidegger's argument is of course to establish the possibility of a mode of knowing which as distinct of that of the sciences does not exhaust itself with the present-at-hand and this is why he begins his interpretation with a question concerning the thing-character of the work of art. This perspective explains the strategy of isolating an ordinary "piece of equipment", peasant shoes, from the rest of Van Gogh's painting and commenting excessively on it. Despite the fact that in Heidegger's thought it would be impermissible to treat the work of art as 'equipment', he nevertheless wishes to draw our attention to the equipment-like nature of the pair of shoes in question.

His strategy is next to show that the shoes exist *qua* equipment by belonging to the everydayness of, or by being useful to, the peasant woman who is depicted wearing them. It is then precisely the question of usefulness that in Heidegger's view discloses the field as the place where the shoes are used as equipment.

²¹² Gadamer (1994: 21) puts it quite mildly in saying that his critics simply thought that after the "so-called

Furthermore the shoes are said to be most originally "what they are", when they fail to claim the peasant woman's attention, i.e. when she is not really aware she is wearing them but she simply "stands and walks in them".

This relationship with the shoes exemplifies on the one hand the manner in which the shoes serve the woman, and on the other hand the process in which the spectators "encounter the character of equipment" (Heidegger, 1975: 35). Actually, this piece of equipment is said to disclose a whole *world* of anxiety concerning the certainty of daily bread, "the wordless joy of having once more withstood want" and the ever present threat of "death".

It could be said with Gadamer (1994: 103) that the "whole world of rural life is in these shoes". This pair of shoes, *qua* equipment is then seen not only as belonging to the earth and being "protected in the *world* of the peasant woman", but also as being perhaps the only means by which the "earth" and this "world" can even be disclosed. In pursuing his interpretation of the Van Gogh painting a step further, Heidegger asserts that the essential consequence of the usefulness characteristic of equipment is its reliability.

Having tentatively "completed" his interpretation, Heidegger sees the painting as "the disclosure of what the equipment, the pair of peasant shoes is in truth", since this "entity" is supposed to emerge "into the unconcealedness of its being" (Ibid: 36). More importantly, the work of art in general shows itself as what allows "the disclosure of a particular being in its being" and constitutes therefore a happening of truth.

The experiencing of art is for Heidegger an event of truth inasmuch as the interpretation of Van Gogh's painting establishes first the inadequacy of

turn [*Kehre*] Heidegger's thinking no longer stood on solid ground".

"dominant thing-concepts" for the correct interpretation of works of art, and secondly that the "most immediate reality of the work, its thingly substructure", does not belong to it in the commonly postulated way (Ibid: 33).

That is why the "riddle" of art (Ibid: 79) can in principle –and despite Heidegger's scepticism regarding the functioning of contemporary art²¹³– be linked with the possibility of the event of truth that Heidegger calls *clearing*²¹⁴. In this context Heidegger employs the notion of clearing (Ibid: 54-55) in an attempt to express the truth happening "in the work-being of the work", which he conceives as being the outcome of a double concealment.

Thus, the clearing is what emerges out of concealment in the modes of dissembling and denial, and which by being conceived as belonging "to the nature of truth as unconcealedness" entails a complementary conception of truth and untruth. In another part of his work Heidegger formulates the happening of truth in a manner that places even errancy in the midst of the interplay of concealment and unconcealment. Errancy is then understood as belonging to "the originary essence of truth" alongside concealment and is thus elevated from the ordinary definition of an "isolated mistake" to being treated as "the kingdom (dominion) of the history of those entanglements in which all kinds of erring get interwoven" (Heidegger, 1930/1998: 150-151).

Since Heidegger emphatically pronounces art to be the "*becoming and happening of truth*" it is hardly surprising when he announces that truth can be

²¹³ See for example the following remark made by Heidegger in the *Spiegel* interview: "I would like to say that I do not see how the modern art shows the way [to the task of thinking], especially since we are left in the dark as to how modern art perceives or tries to perceive what is most proper to art" (Heidegger, 1966/1993b: 115).

²¹⁴ Heidegger (1975: 53) importantly introduces his conception of lightning the following manner: "In the midst of beings as a whole an open place occurs. There is a clearing, a lighting. Thought in reference to what is, to beings, this clearing is in a greater degree than are beings. This open centre is therefore not

thought as arising out of nothing²¹⁵. Although not a proper concept, the 'nothing' signifies in this context the opposite of an object conceived as "present in the ordinary way" with which the work of art might be contrasted, while pointing to the 'fact' that truth is never derived from objects, i.e. from the "present" and the "ordinary". "Rather" continues Heidegger "the opening up of the Open, and the clearing of what is, happens only as the openness is projected, sketched out" and makes "its advent" in the midst of Dasein's 'thrownness' (Ibid: 71). Importantly, Heidegger further introduces the conception that all art is "essentially poetry"²¹⁶ and places language²¹⁷, as what "nominates beings from out of their being" in the centre of the advent of truth. Not only is language thought as synonymous with the clearing and openness pertinent to the human Dasein, but also it is claimed –conversely– that where "there is no

surrounded by what is; rather, the lighting centre itself encircle all that is, like the Nothing which we scarcely know".

²¹⁵ There is of course yet another dimension in which in Heidegger's thought the "nothing" is linked with the event of truth, since it is argued that "in the clear light of the nothing the original openness of beings as such arises", namely in the recognition "that there are beings- and not nothing". This "not nothing", which is normally used as an "appended clarification" is seen as rather making "possible the manifestness of beings in general", while "the essence of the originally nihilating nothing lies in this, that it brings Da-sein for the first time before beings as such". More importantly, few lines below Heidegger explicitly formulates his conception of Dasein's *transcendence* with reference to the *nothing* and *anxiety*: "Da-sein means: being held out into the nothing...Dasein is in any case already beyond beings as a whole. Such being beyond beings we call *transcendence*". It is no accident that therefore the possibility of *selfhood* and *freedom* is seen as grounded on the "original manifestness of the nothing", while Heidegger formulates the relationship of anxiety with the "nothing" in terms of a question: "If Dasein can adopt a stance toward beings only by holding itself out into the nothing and can exist only thus, and if the nothing is originally manifest only in anxiety, then must we not hover constantly in this anxiety in order to be able to exist at all?" (Heidegger, 1929/1998: 90-91).

²¹⁶ It follows that Heidegger (1975: 72-73) wishes to dissociate his conception of *poetry* from the allegedly "vulgar" view that sees poetry as "an aimless imagining of whimsicalities" and "a flight of mere notions and fancies into the realm of the unreal". Consequently Heidegger wishes to question whether the "nature of poetry" can be "adequately thought of in terms of the power of imagination". Apparently, Heidegger adopts here—even if in a negative manner as a result of a polemical attitude against vulgar conceptions of art— a pejorative conception of *imagination*, which does not square with Castoriadis' attempt to give a new dimension to this term.

²¹⁷ There is an urgency concerning Heidegger's (1975: 73) plea to wrest language out of a conception that sees it as "a kind of communication", or as a tool for "verbal exchange and agreement".

language" as in the case of the rest of animal and inanimate nature, "there is also no openness either of that which is not and of the empty" (Ibid: 72-73).

Gadamer (1994: 108) interprets this Heidegger's identification of art with the process of poeticising as the exposition of the fact that the "nature of art does not consist in transforming something that is already formed or in copying something that is already in Being".

Is it a mere coincidence that Heidegger and Gadamer attempt here to theorise a mode of truth pertinent to the event of art, which bears apparent similarities with Castoriadis' attempt to theorise the radical nature of imagination and of socio-historical creation?

Despite the fact that Gadamer's explicit attempt to safeguard the domain of artistic and religious experience²¹⁸ from its being totally "colonised" by the political and Heidegger's quasi-mystical aspiration to be the "guardian and shepherd of Being" are hardly compatible with Castoriadis' unequivocal rejection of any form of religious or quasi-mystical experience as indicative of "heteronomy", this question should remain open.

At any rate, Gadamer (1994: 109) reinforces the Heideggerian insight into the centrality of language and the exemplarity of poetic creation by emphasising that the "poet is so dependent upon the language he inherits and uses that the language of his poetic work of art can only reach those who command the same language". This enables Gadamer to introduce his conception regarding "two

²¹⁸ This attitude is perchance apparent in Gadamer's agreement with Derrida and Vattimo regarding the "need to be free from all dogmatism, above all the dogmatism which refuses to see in religion anything other than the deception or self-deception of human beings". It has to be remarked that behind the recognition regarding the "urgency of religion" that Gadamer traces in Derrida and Vattimo's contributions to the *Capri Dialogues* lurks the "common ground" of Heidegger's "search of God" combined with his attempt to break with "western metaphysics". Of particular interest is Gadamer's assertion that perhaps "we are concerned here with a problem which cannot be solved through human reflection" as "Heidegger

projects" characterising the work of art, viz. one project "that has already occurred where a language holds sway", and a second, complementary project that "allows the new poetic creation to come forth from the first project", while acknowledging the "work of language" as the "most primordial poetry of Being" (Loc.cit- emphasis added).

Now, with regard to the linguistic work, Gadamer has no particular difficulty in establishing first the inexhaustible character of poetic or philosophical texts, and secondly their *historical* mode of being, which is furthermore likened to the mode of being of a historical event.

Apparently, this analogy is based on a conception of language itself as an *event* proper (T&M: 427), and indeed on the "ontological view" that 'being is language- i.e., *self-presentation*- as made accessible by the "hermeneutic experience of being" (T&M: 487).

Thus, in the same manner that historical events cannot be grasped in their entirety with reference to the intentions of their protagonists, the interpretative attempt of the reader of a traditionary text²¹⁹ cannot be reduced to a recovery of the author's intended meaning (T&M: 373).

himself in the end [i.e. in the *Spiegel* interview] came to recognize" in saying that "*only a God can save us*" (Gadamer, 1998b: 207).

²¹⁹ It has to be remarked that Gadamer (1989b: 37-39), acknowledges that neither all modes of writing, nor all "forms of linguistic communicative behaviour" exemplify the same mode of finality with regard to the opening up of a world characteristic of *dialogical* meaning. Gadamer therefore notes that "within the communicative event itself we find texts that offer resistance and opposition to textualization", i.e. *counter-texts*, which can be distinguished in three broad categories, viz. as *anti-texts* [Antitexte] (e.g. jokes, irony), *pseudo-texts* [Pseudotexte] ('filling' material devoid of authentic meaning) and *pre-texts* [Praetexte] (ideological constructions, dreams as theorised by psychoanalysis). Two major implications follow this Gadamer's distinction: First, that even behind the construction of counter-texts lurks a common socio-historical tradition, a "*supporting mutual understanding*" as the philosopher emphatically puts it, and which is explicit in the functioning of "antitexts" and implicit -surfacing only indirectly in the process of translation- in the case of "pseudotexts". Secondly, in an explicit reference to Habermas Gadamer takes the opportunity to note in relation to "pretexts" that the "critique of ideology" can itself be criticised as ideological in that it "represents antibourgeois interests, or whatever interests they may be", while "at the same time masking its own tendentiousness as critique" (Ibid: 39).

What is therefore important is that the "reconstruction" of the "question"²²⁰ that gave rise to the poetic, philosophical, or any other kind of textual work of art cannot be simply "retrieved" with the aid of a "historical method".

This reconstruction is rather hindered by the text's resistance that often takes the form of the readers' "being perplexed" in their encounter with the "traditionary world", and it therefore always already triggers what Gadamer calls a "historical self-mediation between the present and tradition"²²¹ (T&M: 374). This mediation reverses the expected "relation of question and answer", thereby forcing the reader to go both beyond the horizon of the "present" and the historical horizon presented by the text.

As Gadamer formulates it in another part of *Truth and Method*, genuine or authentic hermeneutic experience confirms that tradition "asserts its own truth in being understood", while in so doing it also "disturbs the horizon that had, until then, surrounded us" (T&M: 486). This does not mean that Gadamer attributes some supremacy to the "origin"²²², or that the present is in any sense

²²⁰ It has to be remarked that in Gadamer's view the "original question" circumscribes an horizon in its own right, and thus the "openness of a question" is not conceived as "boundless" but as determined and "limited by the horizon of the question", while a completely indeterminate question, a question lacking an horizon "is, so to speak, floating" (T&M: 363).

²²¹ It has to be remarked that in speaking of "tradition and of conversation with tradition" Gadamer (1985/1989b: 111-emphasis added) does not really wish to "put forward a *collective subject*". Rather, tradition is said to be "the collective name for each individual *text*", the very notion of *text* being employed "in the widest sense, which could include a picture, an architectural work, even a *natural event*". In effect, Gadamer's attempt to avoid a *reification* of tradition, results also in a more fluid conception of the human "subject". As Aylesworth (1991: 64) observes, Gadamer finds -following Heidegger- in speaking a moment of belonging "in which we are already claimed and constituted by/as a tradition", moreover a tradition that "is never, as such objectifiable". Arguably, Aylesworth has found the best possible manner to express the relationship between "tradition" and "humans" with the employment of this "by/as". He is thus able to infer that "just as we cannot objectify ourselves insofar as we belong to and are a tradition, so too with the text. As something that speaks, it is inalienable from its tradition and its concomitant historicity".

²²² It is mainly for this reason that I admit that I find it difficult to follow Vattimo's indirect critique of Gadamer's understanding of the process of the fusion of horizons as performed by the "historically effective consciousness". More specifically, Vattimo (1998: 88) recognises on the one hand that the "*wirkungsgeschichte* of every text, and of the biblical text above all" cannot be ignored. On the other hand he also seems to point to an omission on Gadamer's part in asserting that "the fact that the sacred texts

theorised as "defective" in relation to tradition, since in the "dialectic of question and answer" elaborated by the philosopher the "original question to which the text must be understood as an answer" has a "originary superiority to and freedom from its origins" (T&M: 577).

This is best exemplified if one takes into account the example of pre-eminent texts handed down to us by tradition, as it is the case with classical tragedies. These tragedies were indeed written "for a certain festival" and addressed a "particular social present", but their meaning, their truth-claims are in no sense confined to the socio-historical moment of their creation but they rather address every subsequent historical age (T&M: 577).

Gadamer is thus able to conclude that a "reconstructed question can never stand within its original horizon", since the "historical horizon that circumscribed the reconstruction is not a truly comprehensive one", but is instead "included within the horizon that embraces us as the questioners who have been encountered by the traditionary word" (T&M: 374).

More explicitly put, the "reconstruction" of the original question is only possible inasmuch as it entails that the concepts of "a historical past" are "regained" in such a manner that they "also include our own comprehension of them", i.e. as long as they are the result of the process that Gadamer calls the *fusion of horizons* (T&M: 374). As remarked above though, and despite his insistence that the fusion of horizons that takes place in understanding "*is actually the achievement of language*" (T&M: 378), the disclosure of a "world" entailed by the

which mark our religious experience are handed down to us by tradition" entails that the mediation of tradition does not allow the texts "to survive as unmodifiable objects". Vattimo seems then to suggest that Gadamer's account of the fusion of horizons does not allow for an adequate theorisation of the changing character of the traditionary text –and perhaps of historical events in general– and therefore partly reproduces a reified understanding of the past.

confrontation and "fusion" with tradition is for Gadamer by no means the exclusive privilege of textual or linguistic works of art. Rather, this disclosure is also seen as finding an expression in all modes of art, the "mode of being" of the work of art in general being conceived in terms of presentation²²³ (T&M: 138). Statues and historical monuments, both of "religious" and "secular" origin are thus said to display the "universal ontological valence of pictures more clearly than...intimate portraits", while making present that which they represent in a manner that differs significantly from the mode of representation familiar to the "aesthetic consciousness". This is due to the fact that the monument's "life" is evidently not confined to the "autonomous expressive power" of the image but rather also by the quasi-presence of the commemorated historical event, or of the religious and cosmic powers it attempts to "grasp" and which are held present "in their general significance" by the very functioning of the monument (T&M: 149).

For Gadamer the principle of non-differentiation is the fundamental intention behind even the most elementary forms of religious experience like that of magic²²⁴. This principle is also seen as the fundamental characteristic of the most "primitive" mode of pictures, viz. of mirrors, while it is seen as remains *essential* to "all experience of pictures" despite the progressive development of aesthetic differentiation, i.e. of the ability to perceive a work of art through the mediation of aesthetic notions and criteria (T&M: 139).

²²³ As Gadamer explains few pages below, this characterisation of the mode of being of the work of art "includes *play* (Spiel) and *picture* (Bild), *communion* (Kommunion) and *representation* (Repraesentation)" (T&M: 151).

²²⁴ Gadamer proposes the thesis that although the identity and non-differentiation of picture and pictured is only found in the "prehistory" of the picture, this hardly entails that "a consciousness of the picture that increasingly differentiates and departs further and further from magical identity can ever detach itself entirely" from this identity. It is important to note that Gadamer furthermore interprets the "sacralization of

In effect, the work of art is conceived alongside language as 'an event of being' (*Seinsvorgang*) and therefore as this "event of presentation", which can actually result in the resolution of "the abstraction performed by aesthetic differentiation" (T&M: 151).

What is then "preserved", "re-appropriated" and "presented" in this fusion of horizons characteristic of the work of art? If we admit that the relationship between the artwork and language is not accidental then each accomplishment that results from the fusion must have the fundamental character of a 'happening in language' and must therefore be nothing less than a "coming-to- presentation of Being" (T&M: 159).

Far from designating an abstract and indeterminate state-of-affairs, this fusion is first and foremost the exemplification of a preservation of the "thing-ness" of things, i.e. a retention of the specific qualities that cannot be annulled but he calculations of technological reason. In the same manner that Rilke "poetically illuminates the innocence of the thing in the midst of the general disappearance of thingness by showing it to the angel", the thinker is in principle capable of contemplating "this very thingness" in encountering the work of art (Gadamer, 1994: 108). Paradoxical though it might seem, Gadamer does not only recognise the force of language, of this "primordial poetry of Being" in the *poetic* and the *artistic*; he rather extends it to the "very thing-being of things themselves". Is a thinking that conceives of "all art as poetry" and that discloses the identity of the work of art with language, "still on the way to language" as Gadamer (1994: 109) asserts in an allusion to Heidegger's late work?

art in the nineteenth century" as a specific manifestation of the principle of *non-differentiation* (T&M: 139).

4.2: History, Continuity, Rupture: Fulfilled Time & the Existential Moment

It has been remarked above that Gadamer's conception of the fusion of horizons, but also the overall orientation of his philosophy often create the impression that his conception of historical time puts inappropriate emphasis on continuity and consensus and thus overlooks discontinuity, discord, and the emergence of new, unprecedented forms in history. Central to this sort of criticism would be the paramount importance Gadamer attributes to the notion of tradition and which can be easily interpreted as an ideological opposition to the modern project.

Although I have already tried to show that the function of tradition and the idea of the fusion of horizons in Gadamer's thought are *not* primarily political, the issue requires further discussion. One would have suspected that the invocation of the dialogical model for the theorisation of our encounter with tradition –and thus even with ourselves– could have partly appeased the criticisms.

For, *conversation* is indeed seen by Gadamer as the “manner in which past texts, past information and forms of human creative effort reach us”, and since not only *art* “but all human tidings [*Kunde*] which we perceive, *speak* to us” (Gadamer, 1972: 239), conversation must be the main feature of the fusion of horizons.

In other words, the backbone of this fusion is the dialectic of question and answer, a dialectic mediating the transmission of tradition and the projection to the future in a non-arbitrary manner, i.e. not by “endlessly...expanding the horizon of the past”, but rather by “posing questions and finding answers”, that

are seen as arising out of "what we have become", whilst being also "granted to us as possibilities of our future" (Gadamer, 1972: 240).

Describing our encounter with the text, Gadamer (1989b: 51) reconstructs this dialogical model by the postulation of an "inner ear", an "inner eye" and thus we could also say of an "inner voice" that make –alongside the concomitant disappearance of "the interpreter"²²⁵– possible the very act of understanding. Nevertheless, as expected objections are indeed raised against this dialogical model, the first concerning its alleged reliance on Kant's moral philosophy, and especially on the Kantian ideal of the "good will" and the "absolute commitment for consensus and understanding" resulting from it (Derrida, 1989: 52).

Not only is this postulation in Derrida's (1989: 53) view a relapse to the "metaphysics of the will", but it also poses further problems, the most important of which is that the precondition of interpretive discourse (*Verstehen*) "far from being the continuity of rapport...is...rather the interruption of rapport", or in other words the "suspending of all mediation"(ibid: 52-53). To this one could add Derrida's objections concerning the possibility of employing the concept of "lived experience", "lived context" (*Lebenszusammenhang*), or even of "experience" (*Erfahrung*)²²⁶ at all, on the assumption that "usually metaphysics presents itself as the description of experience as such, of presentation as such" (ibid: 52-53).

²²⁵ This is evidently a prerequisite of the fusion, which we have seen addressed above in a slightly different manner in the discussion of the principle of 'aesthetic non-differentiation'.

²²⁶ It has to be remarked that Gadamer uses the notion of experience in what he understands as a "non metaphysical sense". Aylesworth (1991: 69) observes that Gadamer "is careful to characterise experience as *Erfahrung*. Unlike *Erlebnis*, *Erfahrung* includes a moral relation to another, an other who speaks and calls upon us to respond. Thus for Gadamer, experience is always already 'linguistic', and does not constitute a substratum that is only brought to language reflectively and secondarily". It follows that

Clearly, Derrida's brief but decisive intervention summarises the main points of a possible critique of Gadamer's philosophy, which furthermore –in a manner quite dear to deconstructive practices- is said to properly belong to the onto-theological framework, a framework concurrently dominated by 'presence', the attribution of dignity to the *Will* of the subject, and certainly a system of morality.

Gadamer has quite successfully –and rather easily- shaken off Derrida's criticism regarding his alleged reliance on the Kantian conception of the good will as the ground of moral law. If we read between the lines and we also wish to paraphrase Nietzsche in our interpretative attempt, we could say that Derrida seems to suggest that "old Gadamer's" conception of a good will as the grounding principle for moral, political, epistemic or any other sort *consensus* is at bottom quite naïve and overlooks difference.

Gadamer's (1989b: 55) reply though makes the most of the dialogical character of the exchange between the two thinkers and heavily capitalises on Derrida's *asking a question*, in order to show how his conception of the dialectics of question and answer "is completely unrelated to Kant's *good will*, but it does have a good deal to do with the difference between dialectics and sophistics". One can trace here of course a reversal of the tables and sense the irony behind Gadamer's reply: If Derrida's question is not mere sophistry it must be made in expectation of an answer, and indeed an answer it gets. There is nothing metaphysical or naïve about it. It is this expectation²²⁷ that in Gadamer's view

Aylesworth's interpretation would then still ascribe a moral dimension to Gadamer's dialogical model, but one of Aristotelian, not Kantian origin.

²²⁷ Gadamer (1989b: 56) insists that it is "entirely justifiable to start with the process in which mutual agreement is shaped and reshaped in order to describe the functioning of language and of its possible written forms", while asserting that this is "not at all a kind of metaphysics, but the presupposition that any

precedes any sort of conscious "speech act" and makes possible not only dialogue, but also the constitution of the interlocutors in a primordial manner. Now, although it would be quite feasible to charge Gadamer himself with sophistry here, the point regarding the primordial constitution of the "Self" and the "Other" in language is quite compelling.

Things are rather more complicated though in regard of the alleged domination of presence in Gadamerian dialectics, especially in the notion of the fusion of horizons. For is it not that something "past" is by means of the fusion made available again in the "now", that the "past" *presents* itself in the "present"²²⁸?

Does this not also amount to a conception of historical time which is ultimately based on continuity, or which sees socio-historical change as the outcome of more or less smooth epochal transitions and appropriations?

And what about the inception of the radically new in a historical time that seems to have been theorised mainly from the perspective of tradition?

There is of course Gadamer's commitment to the infinity of language and his deep seated conviction that every "real speaking is a *language event* or to

partner in a dialogue must assume, including Derrida, if he wants to pose questions". More importantly, Gadamer sees the expectation of discord as just another way to "shape", or leave inconclusive the dialogical process, as the following caustic remarks make plain: "Is he [i.e. Derrida] really disappointed that we cannot understand each other? Indeed not, for in his view this would be a relapse into metaphysics. He will, in fact, be pleased, because he takes *this private experience of disillusionment to confirm his own metaphysics*" (Loc. Cit- emphasis added).

²²⁸ A word of caution is certainly required here. It is quite implausible that Gadamer's understanding of the fusion of horizons would argue for the re-emergence of a reified "past". This would mean that Gadamer would have radically distanced himself from the fundamental principles of Heidegger's conception of historical time, which is not at all plausible. Let us briefly recall that Heidegger in relation to his attempt at the recovery of the original meaning of Being suggests: "However, we do not want to make a past being live again in the present. On the contrary, we want to become aware of Being. In reflection, we remember being and the way it inceptively presences, and presences still as the inception, without thereby ever becoming a present being. The inception is certainly something that has been but not something past. What is past is always a no-longer-being, but what has been is being that still presences but is concealed in its incipience" (Heidegger 1998c: 73). Finally one can also point to Heidegger's (1992: 16E) insistence that the "past" and the "authentic future can never become present".

express it with Hölderlin, *something infinitely new*" (Gadamer, 1970: 353). Certainly though, there are no easy answers to these questions, and any sort of reflection on the issues mentioned above has to be tentative. We can nevertheless at least trace in Gadamer's philosophy a willingness to both account and allow for the emergence of the new in history and even in the individual human life, at least to the extent to which the notion of historicity can mediate between a conception of universal and personal history.

Indeed Gadamer (1972: 232) wishes to expand the concept of historicity, which seems to suggest "nothing about the relationship of events—that it really was so" but rather indicates the specific mode of being of humans who stand within history and "whose existence can be understood fundamentally only through the concept of historicity", and the related concept of the "existential moment".

Furthermore Gadamer suggests that the conception of continuity in history can be traced back to Aristotle's meditations on time and especially on the "ontological embarrassment which befell ancient Greek thought when it came to defining time", due to the inability to make present the smaller constitutive part of time, viz. the "moment" expressed in terms of the "now".

Although Gadamer is very careful not to identify the experience of the flow of time with the primordial experience of continuity of history he nevertheless thinks that both conceptions belong to the same ontological horizon, i.e. the horizon of the Greeks²²⁹. Rather, the experience of continuity in history seems to be grounded on the fact that despite the irredeemably transitory character of

²²⁹ This is one of the many instances where Gadamer's thought is reminiscent of Heidegger's formulations. Gadamer (1972: 233) even suggests that the "ontological problematic of time consists in the fact that for

history, indeed in the midst of all perishing, there is also a "*simultaneous becoming*" and vice versa. It follows that the alleged continuity or in general the possible relationships between the perceived historical "events" are premised on the transitoriness or on the "endless flow of changes" of historical time.

Indeed, if this conception of historical time can be upheld at all, does it follow that we can succumb either to an extreme perspectivism, or to sheer nominalism? If everything in the stream of historical time can be experienced either in terms of becoming and rise or of perishing and fall then the view one holds on historical events would seem to be relevant only to one's *positioning*. Although even the most superficial glance at the state of historiography and at the divergent, conflicting interpretations of so-called great historical events would suggest that one's positioning plays a crucial part in the perception and narration of history, the question persists whether the appreciation of events is either completely arbitrary or ultimately reduced to being situated to particular contexts.

As Gadamer (1972: 233) remarks, even classificatory systems can be seen as the product of "our adjudicating consciousness" and in the last analysis as arbitrary and therefore as having no "genuine historical reality".

This evidently posits an irredeemable breach between historical events and their perception and in effect deprives the events themselves from any claim to historical consciousness. Gadamer asks his readers to take with him a step back from this view of history allegedly based on Greek ontology and from the "erroneous nominalistic tendency of this way of thinking" in order to allow for a more primordial experience of history to emerge.

the ancients their own Being was neither expressible nor understandable within the framework of the

There is then for Gadamer rupture²³⁰ or discontinuity in the course of events, which is not reducible to the interpretive workings of human consciousness, but rather has its roots in the historical events themselves. More accurately put, Gadamer (1972: 233) postulates the existence of a kind of "original experiencing of the time-span of an epoch (*epocheneinschnittes*)", which informs and grounds the differentiations and classifications preformed by historical consciousness.

Kant's dictum about the French revolution, namely that "such an event does not let itself be forgotten", is then interpreted by Gadamer (Loc. Cit) as an indication of this peculiar power of historical events, which suggests that the "historical constellation" marking an "epochal time-span is not an external measure from which one reads time but rather determines the contents of time itself", of "what we call history".

Thus, although the actual attribution of "epoch-making significance" to a historical event is a process possibly flawed with error, an epoch-making event is said to produce in human consciousness the experience of difference and discontinuity, "of cessation in the midst of incessant change" (Ibid: 234), in

philosophy of Being which they had developed".

²³⁰ As suggested above, Gadamer (1989b: 56) likewise accepts that discontinuity and rupture might characterise also *language*, especially the very act of *understanding* or even a specific interpretative approach, as for example in the case of psychoanalysis. Nevertheless, in the same manner that he would not be in favour of a radical differentiation between continuity and rupture in history, the philosopher is also unwilling to accept a radical breach between the continuity guaranteed by the ideal of mutual understanding and the event of rupture in the dialogical process. Furthermore, Gadamer sees Ricoeur's attempt to bridge the *hermeneutics of suspicion* with the *hermeneutics of intention* as another instance where a radical break as discussed above is philosophically refuted. At any rate, the theorisation of discontinuity is unmistakably articulated from the perspective of continuity, which in Gadamer's self-interpretation is directly linked with the influence of Kierkegaard in his thought: "I must admit that one of the early influences on my thinking was Kierkegaard's radical confrontation of the ethical and aesthetic stages of existence. This, in fact, is the basis for my hermeneutical option for continuity, designated by the figure of William, the assessor of *Either/Or*. In him ethical continuity stands over against aesthetic immediacy and the self-criticism of the conscience-bearing will is opposed to aesthetic enjoyment" (Gadamer, 1985/1989b: 97).

other words it is seen as "establishing a *caesura*" (Gadamer, 1970: 349). Apparently, the main feature of an 'event' of this order is that it interrupts what Heidegger understands as the "inauthentic" experience of time, i.e. the "reckoning with time"²³¹ that from time immemorial has allegedly concealed the fundamental problem of the being of time with its emphasis on the use of time for the purposes of temporal measurement.

It is well known that this reckoning with time that is best exemplified by the human being's relationship to the clock constitutes for both Heidegger²³² and Gadamer also the basis for the development of the scientific concept of time. Gadamer (1970: 343) sees this understanding of time in terms of an "empty flow" as most useful for the purposes of measurement and for "the quantifying observation of processes of motion" of the natural sciences, at least before the development of the concept of simultaneity²³³ in modern physics

²³¹ In *Being and Time* Heidegger attempted to show how the 'time' that is commonly accessible to Dasein is not *primordial*, but rather is concurrent with the phenomenon of *making-present*, which is seen as the "primary basis for falling into the ready-to hand and present-at-hand". Having established this, Heidegger aspired to designate as primordial time, authentic temporality, i.e. the temporality which is not an entity but rather "temporalizes itself" and which manifests itself as the *εκατακὶκόν* pure and simple". Furthermore in an attempt to draw a distinction between the reified temporal dimensions that result from *inauthentic* experiences of time and authentic temporality, Heidegger opted to call "the phenomena of the future, the character of having been, and the Present, the 'ecstases' of [authentic] temporality". Authentic temporality is then for Heidegger "the primordial 'outside-of-itself' in and for itself", and thus not an "entity which first emerges from itself; its essence is a process of temporalizing in the unity of the ecstases" (B&T: 376-377). The importance of this distinction for Heidegger's account of authentic historicity cannot be overestimated, since Dasein's being authentically "there" in the *moment of vision* as regards the Situation [as opposed to the simple state-of-affairs] which has been disclosed" is premised on temporality making possible "the unity of existence, facticity and falling" and in this way constituting "primordially the totality of the structure of care" (B&T: 376).

²³² Heidegger (1992: 4E) sees the clock, of what "shows the time", as the exemplification of the manner in which the physicist encounters time, since it "is a physical system in which an identical temporal sequence is constantly repeated", while it "provides an identical [temporal] duration that constantly repeats itself". It is important to note that in Heidegger's view in this kind of reckoning with time, no "now-point of time is privileged over any other. As 'now', any now-point of time is the possible earlier of a later; as 'later', it is the later of an earlier".

²³³ Similarly, Heidegger (1992: 3E) has as early as 1924 identified a reawakening of interest in time in the natural sciences and especially in Einstein's relativity theory, which he describes as formulating the following propositions: "Space is nothing in itself; there is no absolute space. It exists merely by way of the bodies and energies contained in it (An old proposition of Aristotle). Time too is nothing. It persists merely as a consequence of the events taking place in it. There is no absolute time and no absolute

"relativised the problem of temporal measurement". Historical time is not though originally "measured time", and where it attains this form as in the case of chronological classification and the distinguishing of historical periods, it does not have the character of the arbitrary "co-ordination of an event to the periodicity of nature or of heaven" (Gadamer, 1970: 349).

Despite the fact that historical and natural times are said to differ in nature, it would be at least imprudent to surmise that they are radically incompatible, and perhaps this explains why Gadamer uses a metaphor from the realm of nature in order to describe the peculiar character of the epoch. Thus, in astronomy "a certain constellation was originally designated for chronological purposes, which by its reappearance is a kind of caesura", and which marks a new cycle of celestial movements. Similarly, as already remarked above, the philosopher understands an epoch-making event as establishing itself a *caesura* in the flow of historical time in other words as *demarcating* between that which passes away as old and that which emerges as new²³⁴.

Accordingly, the experience of time attached to the dawning of a new epoch must have the character of discontinuity and transition, and indeed Gadamer

simultaneity either". Even in the case of Einsteinian physics though, the problem of time remains in Heidegger's opinion still thought from the perspective of measuring nature within a "system of space-time relations".

²³⁴ Gadamer (1972: 234) also calls the experience of historical time caused by an epoch-making event a "cessation in the midst of incessant change" and attempts to further clarify the nature of the "event" with recourse to the manner in which this experience finds its expression in everyday speech. Thus, in Gadamer's understanding, when people designate their historical times say as the "epoch of atomic energy" what they indirectly indicate is that "something 'new' has happened such that it will not soon be cancelled out by some other 'new' and conversely, that in the light of this 'new' we must denominate the 'old' as old in a qualitatively distinct and unambiguous sense". Moreover, as Gadamer remarks a few lines below, when such an epoch-making event occurs, "it is as though time itself has grown old, not only in the sense that the past is something sunken and no longer actual and present – a uniform and surveyable temporal stretch of oldness, so to speak – but also in the sense that its own future stands under the epoch-making significance of an epoch-making event".

wishes to show how the notion of transition indicates the "true being of time", although in a different sense than that indicated by the transitory and fleeting nature of the "now" (Gadamer, 1970: 350).

There is certainly some sort of proximity between what could be called the "existential" and the "historical" events as Gadamer's account ventures to show. On the one hand, philosophical reflections on time since Aristotle have in Gadamer's view almost invariably acknowledged the human being as the creature who has a unique sense of time (αἰσθησις χρόνου). This sense of time points at the same time to the human being's ability to have *foresight* and therefore to anticipate the future, although –regrettably– Gadamer bypasses the problem posed by the limit-case of foresight in the form of prophecy.

It is true, says Gadamer that even animals show a certain anticipation of the future in preparing themselves in various ways for different seasons of the year, but this is hardly a sense of time proper, while it seems to be entirely dependent on the natural cycle of life²³⁵. Foresight in the case of human beings though, means seeing "anticipatorily that which is not yet" and thereby bridging the "foreseen" with the "present" and this is why a sense of time is said to be "a sense for what is future" as the Aristotelian notion of "prolepsis" manifests.

Is not purposeful action the instance where the 'futurity' characterizing the human experiencing of time seems to find its most pure expression and where human beings can be seen as breaking with the cycle of nature in projecting and perhaps even attaining their own goals?

²³⁵ So-called "collecting animals" like bees and ants are a limit case though and they arguably pose a challenge to philosophy, since they "seem to have something analogous to human foresight" as Gadamer (1970: 343) readily admits. In any case the experience of time between animals and humans seems to differ dramatically, although it is true that being relatively in the dark even with regard to human temporality it is extremely difficult to extrapolate on the animal sense of time with certainty.

Gadamer's answer to this question can be rather seen as ambiguous. For, in the very heart of what is considered to be a positive and unique attribute of human beings Gadamer –following Heidegger– traces an inauthentic, or derivative mode of temporality. The very act of envisaging the desired state of affairs that purposeful action strives to actualise is said to generate a quasi-reified experience of time, which permits "time to appear as something of which man can dispose", while also creating a peculiar sense of "empty" duration. The latter, being grounded on the human being's "anticipatory disposition" signifies for Gadamer rather an experience of time as "time for" and time until the actualisation of the aim, which furthermore makes time appear as "empty" since it is viewed primarily in relation to "what fills it" (Gadamer, 1970: 343). Like Heidegger, Gadamer sees the possibility of a primordial or authentic experience of time lying in the confrontation of human beings with *death*, since in this case time itself is experienced in the form of a "hostile opposition" that "destroys the illusion of an unlimited continuation of the possibility of disposing of time". *Death* is here intended in the widest possible sense and far from referring merely to biological demise, it aims to encapsulate any sort of "borderline-experience" that makes accessible the irreversibility of time through the "negative experience of being too late or past" (Ibid: 344). Moreover, the experience of a "prolonged" time is again seen as possibly stemming from the inauthentic experience of time as "empty" and disposable, even if in a "*privative* form" as it is the case with the way in which time is experienced in 'boredom', or conversely under a more positive light, as in the case when one wishes time could last longer for the sake of a beautiful moment (Ibid: 345).

It could be then argued that in Gadamer's view, in the cases referred to above, time would be experienced in a derivative form irrespectively of the negative or positive moods linked with the experience itself, since in a sense it would be again indirectly accessible in terms of a measurement²³⁶. As remarked above, Gadamer sees the encounter with death and anxiety as the only possible path that would open up the possibility of an authentic experiencing of time.

In his view, the most important inference that can be drawn from Heidegger's analytic of Dasein is not only the demonstration that the mode of being of time is not that of *presence-at-hand*, but also the acknowledgment that self-consciousness is not the only source of the "horizon of time". Rather, the "event of Being" that becomes accessible in authentic temporality involves the "constitution" of Da-sein, i.e. the mutual constitution of the human being and of the "region" of Being that becomes accessible through the permeation of the temporal horizons of past and future.

The temporal horizon available to human beings is thus equally the region in which the human being's "concern for 'care' understands itself", while at the same time "this horizon is "filled by this understanding" (Gadamer, 1970: 345-346). Thus, the proper experience of time as transition would mean that what Gadamer calls the "indefinite-definite" being of time is recognised as such, and that accordingly history is not merely seen as a concurrent "passing away" and

²³⁶ Although Gadamer does not explicitly make this point, one cannot help inferring this argument by a simple comparison of his position with that of Heidegger, whom Gadamer follows closely in his meditations on time. Having explicitly refuted the act of *measuring* as the "original way of dealing with time", Heidegger (1992: 14E) ventures to show how authentic temporality supersedes boredom, since the coming back to the possibilities of the "past" can "never become what one calls boring", i.e. "that which uses itself and becomes worn out". More importantly, the authentic experience of time signifies that time "never becomes long because it originally has no length".

"developing" of perceived states-of- affairs, but as the emergence of the new out of an act of recollection of the old as it happens in the midst of its very dissolution (Ibid: 346-347). As Gadamer remarks, Heidegger's treatise "On Becoming in Passing Away" is exemplary in regard of the primordial experiencing of transition in that it systematically contrasts two modes of dissolution, the "ideal" and the "real". The latter refers to what is most commonly perceived as dissolution, the actual decline and fall of socio-historical formations, while the former indicates the recollection of dissolution, that at the same time permits the future "to be free in its own, yet uncertain determination" (Ibid: 347). This formulation brings the problem of historical transition closer to the very problematic of the fusion of horizons and to Heidegger's formulations on the relationship between the inception of history and the "present" time.

It does not suffice to merely indicate the evident relationship between Gadamer's understanding of the horizon of the present as constituted by the merging of the horizons of the past and the future, and Heidegger's conception of authentic historical enactment as repetition of the 'past' in its 'how' (Heidegger, 1992: 20E). We should also take notice of the fact that in the same breath Heidegger also lays bare the "*first principle of all hermeneutics*", namely the grounding of the very possibility of accessing historical time on the "*possibility according to which any specific present understands how to be futural*". This formulation has in Heidegger's eyes the power to reveal the fallacies of the "fantastical path to supra-historicity that we are supposed to find in the *Weltanschauung*" and to establish beyond doubt the insight that the "enigma of history" is unapproachable as long as history is treated as "an object

of contemplation for method", since it rather "lies in what it means to *be* historical" (Loc. Cit.).

What is really intended by this 'how' that allegory 'persists' in the passage of history and why is the "past", in effect historical time itself, said to be *indeterminate* by both Heidegger and Gadamer? Indeed, how does this allegedly novel conception of historicity relate to the "concealed essence of history"?

On the one hand, both thinkers undoubtedly attempt to break with the age-old understanding of history that Heidegger –in what seems to be an allusion to Schelling's *The Ages of the World*- describes as the "Ages that see in history only what is past", while degrading this 'past' in the mode of "something that just naturally prepares inadequate pre-formations of what is attained in the present" (Heidegger, 1998c: 83).

This ossified understanding of history entails for the philosopher that the "ages" have been -and still remain- "victim" to the ultimate convictions of historiology and that they consequently "busy themselves with the transformation of *historical depictions*", which 'they' mistake for "*political deeds*". Heidegger's response to this conception was certainly to grasp history by and large in terms of its *inception*, a perception that allowed him furthermore to define history as "*the happening [Ereignis] of a decision about the essence of truth*". This presents us with a problem, since the attempt to move away from a conception that sees in history the succession of a series of events that are interlinked to form a "causal nexus", is in Heidegger's case naturally marked by a shift from the

problem of causality to that of truth²³⁷. As discussed in earlier chapters, and especially in chapter two, the *inception* of history is seen as determining the "present" and indeed even the "future" of "Western humanity" and thus the remembrance of the inception is not "a flight into the past" but rather "readiness for what is to come" (Heidegger, 1998c: 17).

The peculiar mode of being of the "inception" is further disclosed in Heidegger's interpretation of Anaximander, which attempts to make the most of the historical distance separating the contemporary reader from the pre-Socratics. Of particular importance for the purposes of the present work is Heidegger's interpretation of Anaximander's dictum "ἀρχὴ τῶν ὄντων ὁ ἀτρεῖπον", which Heidegger (1998c: 92) renders as "Enjoinment for the respectively present is the repelling of limits".

The parenthesis opened by the thinker and his additional comments to this first, rough, so characteristically idiosyncratic translation identifies more explicitly the "enjoinment" (ἀρχή) with "the repelling of the limit" (ἀ-τρεῖπον) and further traces a peculiar resistance to duration in the very "incipience of being", which "withholds itself from what has been commenced" (Loc.cit). Setting aside the sense of *principium* and "principle" that in his view was only later attached to the word, Heidegger traces in the early Greek conception of the ἀρχή a conception of the "beginning and the place of beginning for a process, a result". From this Heidegger infers that "being a beginning", in other words the very

²³⁷ Thus, the "decision" that marks the inception is said to determine, "transform" and "ground", the "manner in which the whole of beings is revealed" and in which humanity itself "is allowed to stand in the midst of this revelation" (Heidegger, 1998c: 17). It is important also to note that Heidegger does not use the concept of "ground" in the sense of "cause" since this is perceived by the philosopher as a "premature" identification stemming from the conception of "a creator according to the Bible and Christian dogma". The alternative would then be for Heidegger (1998c: 16) to think "the manner in which the ground *includes us in its essence*, not the manner in which we take the ground to be merely an *object* and use it for an *explanation of the world*".

mode of being of the inception involves "being left behind in the course of the [inaugurated] process" and thus it is in the very essence of the beginning to be "there just to be abandoned and passed over".

The *apxḗ* is thus theorized as a "way-making for the node and compass of emergence" and since it is not really "left behind in the progression" the *apxḗ* is said to release "emergence and what emerges". Indeed, this release happens in such a manner that "what is released is first retained in the *apxḗ* as enjoiment" and consequently the *apxḗ* is an "enjoining egress" that pervades transition. The *apxḗ* is an egress that "everywhere prevails", and which by including everything in its enjoiment "predetermines a domain" or rather makes "anything like a domain available in the first place". It is furthermore suggested that because "egress and pervasiveness belong together in the essence of the *apxḗ*" a third moment emerges, not as "a result" but as an "equally originary and essential moment". This is precisely "the domain-character of the *apxḗ*, the measurable and the measured" (Heidegger, 1998c: 93- emphasis added). More importantly, the *apxḗ* disclosed as the "threefold unity of egress, pervasiveness, and domain" is directly linked with the *ἀπειρον*, which is usually translated as the "limitless" or "infinite".

Correct though this translation might be, Heidegger notes it still "says nothing" and for this reason he prefers to interpret the *ἀπειρον* as "that which repels all limits, and relates itself solely to the presencing of what presences". This relating of *ἀπειρον* to the extant has the character of an inception and therefore the *ἀπειρον* itself is thought *qua apxḗ*, viz. as the threefold unity discussed above.

In other words, in Heidegger's interpretation of Anaximander the ἀπειρον is the ἀρχή, and indeed "the ἀρχή of being"; the inception is the repelling, conceived in the form of a repelling of limitation (Heidegger, 1998c: 95). This interpretation is heavily premised on Heidegger's strategy to "mistrust grammar and stick to the matter", i.e. in refusing to see in the prefix -α- a mere grammatical *privatum*, the expression of mere lack or absence. Rather in the common compound of his favourite triad of α-ρχή, ἀ-πειρον, and α-λήθεια Heidegger sees the expression of the determination of the "means and the possibility" of the "away" and the "not" (Ibid: 95-96). Indeed, not only is Heidegger convinced about the essential unity of being and truth as "announced" in this commonality between ἀπειρον and ἀλήθεια, but more importantly he is able to link presencing and repelling with duration and permanence.

How is this permanence to be thought if the prejudice of contemporary – and ancient- times that sees duration or lastingness (αἰón) as the "highest distinction of the ὄν, of what presences" is to be superseded? Let us briefly return to Anaximander's fragment and to Heidegger's attempt to differentiate his reading from those of Nietzsche and Diels. In order to better grasp Heidegger's reading of Anaximander it is important to bear in mind that in Heidegger's (1998c: 90) opinion due to his insistence on "the empty opposition" between being and becoming, Nietzsche has made the grasping of "Greek thought impossible²³⁸". Although a detailed account of Heidegger's

²³⁸ It seems that Heidegger sees the opposition between being and becoming in Nietzsche's translation of the fragment in his posthumously published lecture *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, which Heidegger (1998c: 84) cites: "Where the source of things is, to that place they must also pass away, according to necessity, for they must pay penance and be judged for their injustices, in accordance with the ordinance of time". It should be noted that Nietzsche's translation is not based on the Diels-Kranz edition

interpretation of the fragment is beyond the scope of the present work, it is still important to cite below both Anaximander's fragment and Heidegger's translation:

Εξ' ὧν δὲ ἡ γένεσις ἐστὶ τις οὐσία, καὶ τὴν φθορὰν εἰς ταῦτα
Γίνεσθαι κατὰ τὸ χρεὼν δίδόναι γὰρ αὐτὰ δίκην καὶ τίειν
Ἀλλήλοις κατὰ τὴν τοῦ χρόνου τάξιν

Whence emergence is for what respectively presences also an
Eluding into this (as to the Same), emerges accordingly the compelling
Need: there is namely what presences itself (from itself), the fit, and each
Is respected (acknowledged) by the other, (all of this) from overcoming
The unfit according to the allotment of temporalizing by time
(Heidegger, 1998c: 87).

It certainly does not take an expert in Greek, or even an initiate in the peculiarities of Heidegger's thought to recognise in this "translation" an interpretation, and in this sense Heidegger would not find it difficult to exemplify the validity of his famous motto which sees an interpretation taking already place in every translating act. In what follows the attempt will be made to summarise the most important points of Heidegger's elaborations on the interpreted fragment with specific emphasis on the problem of time that apart from being the main theme of this chapter, concludes also the passage.

of the Presocratics (*Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*) but on an earlier version, where the word ἀλλήλοις is omitted and this explains why this dimension (i.e. the dimension of mutual presence, which Heidegger translates as "mutual acknowledgement") is lost in his translation (see Nietzsche, 1993: 28-29, translator's note). Heidegger must have felt uncomfortable with Nietzsche's interpretation, which sees Anaximander's fragment as disclosing that the primal being has to be *indeterminate* in order for *becoming* to keep unfolding. It might also be thought that Heidegger mostly mistrusted the links Nietzsche draws between the fragment and Schopenhauer's insight in the *Parerga und Paralipomena*, according to which all human beings are condemned to death and thus they can be said to pay for their birth a first time with their *life* and a second time with their *death*. Nietzsche furthermore understands Anaximander as the first who saw in the multiplicity of things an aggregate of injustices that have to be paid for and therefore as the first among the Greeks who grasped the *moral* problem regarding the *origin* of becoming and the *perishing* of that which –presumably by the very 'fact' of its existence- has "the right" to *be* (see Nietzsche, 1993: 29-33).

The fragment speaks about γένεσις and φθορά, and these Greek words have for Heidegger nothing in common with the Nietzschean or the Hegelian juxtaposition between "being" and "becoming". In his reading, γένεσις and φθορά, rendered as emergence and elusion are seen as belonging together; emergence is said to actually emerge "as what eludes", and to appear "in this emergence when it is a transition". Heidegger thus shifts once more the emphasis from duration to transition, although this is a transition understood as preserving "what is enjoined in the enjoiment", viz. τὸ ἀνείπον.

A being, is not therefore a being "to the extent to which it is something durable" but because it is "something that presences" and indeed in such a manner that this presencing "does not decay into mere presence" (Ibid: 98).

In chapter one we have briefly commented on Heidegger's belief that Parmenidis and Heraclitus ultimately say the "Same". In this context, Anaximander is thought to say: "emergence and elusion emerge from and go away into the Same". This enigmatic "Same" does not "merely contain" emergence and elusion "like a passive receptacle", but it rather "corresponds to the compelling need [i.e. to the χρεὼν of Anaximander] because the latter...is itself the Same". In Heidegger's (1998c: 99) somewhat awkward formulation, "This Same, enjoiment (ἀρχή), this Same, the ἀνείπον, is τὸ χρεὼν, need, what compels". "Need", τὸ χρεὼν, should not be understood as lack, want, or misery, but as the "more fulfilled determination of the essence of the ἀρχή", and therefore enjoiment in the unity of "egress, pervasiveness, disclosure for emergence and elusion" is seen as having the "fundamental character of this compelling need" (Ibid: 100). Furthermore through an interpretation of ἀδίκη as the "unfit", as "what does not fit itself into enjoiment" and respectively of

δική as what "fits itself into enjoinderment", Heidegger arrives at an interpretation of "διδόναι δικήν καὶ τίσιν ἀλλήλοις" that sees in giving "what is fit and granting mutual acknowledgment" an *overcoming* of "the unfit" (ἀδικία), which is seen as belonging "to the essence of presencing as non-essence" (Ibid: 101-102). Overcoming the unfit is then seen as belonging to "the essence of what respectively presences as such", for "as such it fits into transition".

The latter is said to be "always presencing, in which emergence and evasion presence above all" and to thus contain in itself "the Same whence coming to be and whither passing away presence", or it is the "pure emerging of that Same", of "being itself" (Ibid: 103).

Heidegger hears in Anaximander's fragment the insipient saying of being, and sees being itself as "*lingering, presencing*", which furthermore in so presencing "has the enjoinderment of its essence in time" (Ibid: 104-105). Nevertheless, this time, the time of the fragment is not the empty time of modern science; it is not a measurable parameter, a "standard scale" which along *space* may serve for measuring and estimating something.

To the modern conception of a unified space-time Heidegger attempts to juxtapose the Greek couplet of χρόνος-τόπος (Ibid: 103). Although Heidegger (1998d: 141) is well aware of the fact that already "among the Greeks, in Aristotle's *Physics*, the essence of time was understood on the basis of *number*", he is convinced that there is a primordial Greek experience of time that might be traceable in Greek mythology²³⁹ and poetry.

²³⁹ It has to be remarked that *myth* is for Heidegger the proper means to relate to the appearing being and thus to the very essence of the *divine*: "Since τὸ θεῖον and τὸ δαίμόνιον (the divine) are the uncanny that look into the unconcealed and present themselves in the ordinary, therefore μῦθος is the only appropriate mode of the relation to appearing Being, since the essence of μῦθος is determined just as essentially as are θεῖον and δαίμόνιον, on the basis of disclosedness...it is therefore that the legend of the gods is *myth*...[and

In Heidegger's *Parmenides* it is thus argued that the Greek "dictum" of time names the very relation between concealment and disclosure, "appearance and emergence", as it occurs in Sophocles' tragedy *Aias/Aix* (V, 646f.). In concluding this chapter let us briefly consider the Greek text followed by Heidegger's translation:

Ἀπανθ' ὁ μακρὸς αναρίθμητος χρόνος
Φύει τ' ὀδῆλα καὶ φανένια κρύπτεται.

The broad, incalculable sweep of time lets emerge everything
That is not open as well as concealing (again) in itself
What has appeared (Heidegger, 1998d: 140)

Heidegger begins his interpretation with the verb *κρύπτεσθαι*, which he sees as equivalent to his concept of concealment concluding thereby that the primordial attribute of time (*χρόνος*) is that it conceals. In this sense, time is not a sequence of "indifferent now-points" that can be spatially determined, but is rather "something that in its way bears beings, releasing them and taking them back". In Heidegger's view then time is for the Greeks primordially "in every

that] man in the Greek experience, and only he, is in his essence and according to the essence of ἀλήθεια the god-sayer" (Heidegger, 1998d: 112). Thus, not only is the "oblivion of Being" allegedly characteristic of western metaphysics synonymous with atheism "correctly understood", i.e. atheism viewed as "the absence of the gods", but rather together they are thought as constituting the basic feature of the history of the West ever since the decline of "the Greek world" (Loc. Cit). Heidegger (1998d: 111) asserts that we can capture the essence of the Greek gods if we call them the "attuning ones", since from this "attuning and pointing light stems the brilliance of θεῖον", of the "divine" that Heidegger translates as "the shining". Heidegger also capitalizes on the common root of θεῖον (divine) and θεῶν (the looking one, the one that shines into) to characterize the Greek gods as συν-ἰστορεῖς with humans, namely the "ones who 'see' and have seen and as such have beings in unconcealedness and can therefore point to them". Since nevertheless the gods are not mere "witnesses" Heidegger calls them also ἰστορεῖς proper, i.e. as themselves bringing something into view. This conception of the divine entails a fundamental understanding of ἱστορία (history) as the *bringing into view*, as the act of placing "in the light, in the brightness", as the "event of the essential decision about the essence of truth" (Ibid: 111 and 113). It might be interesting to note in this context that Patocka sees Heidegger as grasping history mainly in terms of freedom. This conception means that history "is not a drama which unfolds before our eyes but a responsible realization", or that history is never a mere perception on the part of an allegedly disinterested observer but a responsibility. However, as Patocka remarks, Heidegger does not understand freedom "either as a *liberum arbitrium* or as a laxness in the realization of duty, but... as a freedom of letting being be what it is", which presupposes "not only an understanding for being but also a shaking of what at first and for the most part is taken for being in naïve everydayness" (Patocka 1996:49).

case only the right or wrong time, the appropriate or inappropriate time", *xpóvos* is the "favourable and granted time as distinguished from the untimely".

As remarked above, this primordial experience of "time" does not correspond to the empty and homogeneous space of physics or geometry but to the Greek *tótos* that Heidegger translates with the word place. The place is "the originally gathering holding of what belongs together"; *tótos* is "specifically that place to which something appertains, e.g. fire and flame and air up, water and earth below" (Heidegger, 1998d: 117 & 140-141; Heidegger, 1998c: 103). Moreover, in the same manner that *tótos* "orders the appurtenance of a being to its dwelling place" *xpóvos* regulates "the appurtenance of the appearing and disappearing to their destined *then* and *when*".

In the excerpt from Sophocles *xpóvos* is then called *μακρός* because it has the capacity, "indeterminable by man and always given the stamp of the current time", to bring things into appearance and to lead them back to concealment.

It is this primordial characteristic of time that Heidegger feels is immune to, or "essentially remote" from all calculation, as the adjective *αναριθμητος* suggests. Heidegger (1998d: 141) even explains the derivation of the Greek word for time from the name of the highest of the Olympic gods, the "ancient father of Zeus", the "immemorial god" Kronos²⁴⁰ as exactly an indication of this remoteness from calculation characteristic of the originary experience of time. If *tótos* and *xpóvos* make possible the surpassing of the derivative and inauthentic understanding of the time-space coordination, then they must also

²⁴⁰ This interpretation is certainly at odds with the ordinary view that the derivation is based on the experience of *perishing* characteristic of time, which squares with the fact that according to myth Kronos was devouring his own children. According to myth Zeus escaped and thus became the originator of the line of the Olympian gods.

point to the direction of the openness made available in the experience of truth as αλήθεια.

In effect they must be paradigmatic in shaking the immediate understanding of being making thus possible a new, unexpected experience of being. This Heidegger (Ibid: 149) describes as the "awakening for this 'it is' of a being" or as the "watching over the clearing of beings", which happens suddenly, in Greek *εξαίφνης* or as Heidegger writes "εξαφάνης", tracing in this later word an indication of "the way that something irrupts into appearance, from non-appearance".

Have we not arrived here in another way of describing Gadamer's fulfilled time and of joining together the idea of the 'actual' historical event with that of the existentialist moment? Moreover can we say that Heidegger's conception of the *inception* and Gadamer's "*fusion of horizons*" are reformulations of the old Platonic insight according to which time is the moving image of eternity? And finally, is not the answer itself historical, i.e. bound to the reciprocity of the historicity pertinent to any "present" age and of the "liberating" moment of vision, or is it not itself a fusion?

Concluding remarks

In this chapter the attempt was made to address the fundamental questions posed by the present thesis from a deeper perspective. The question of whether we can still think of history –and act historically– in a more primordial manner than that dictated by the sciences was again answered in the affirmative and this despite the fact that we conclude our elaborations on time, historicity and meaning in an aporetic manner. I hope that the mode of exposition as well as

the actual content of the discussion on Heidegger's attempt to replace the modern conception of time/space with the Greek experience of χρόνος/τόπος in this chapter provides a vivid account of the way in which tradition is appropriated in the dialogical process.

Conclusion

'Eternal Remembrance!' the boys joined in again. 'Karamazov', cried Kolya, is it true what religion teaches, that we shall rise again from the dead, that we shall see one another again, and Ilyushenka? 'Certainly', we shall be resurrected, certainly we shall see one another again, and we shall tell one another happily, joyfully, everything that has happened', replied Alyosha, half laughing and half overcome with emotion (Dostoevsky, *The Karamazov Brothers*).

Fyodor Dostoevsky concludes the *Karamazov Brothers* with this verbal exchange between Alyosha Karamazov and Kolya, one of his underage companions. What is said in the exchange and why is it significant for the purposes of this conclusion, or for any conclusion at all? Of course the passage quite directly speaks of religious teachings of Christian origin, of life and death, indeed of life after death and of the expected -in Christianity- event of resurrection.

Religious-doctrinal issues form certainly a legitimate part of contemporary philosophical reflection, but although I am favourably disposed towards this attitude, I will refrain from commenting -or passing any sort of judgement- on this dimension of the text. I would rather like to point to a complementary dimension of the text, one that speaks about happiness, being with one another, eternal duration. In other words I am interested in the depiction of the a-temporal in temporal terms, although this interest does not conceal the intention of criticism.

On the contrary, I would like to suggest that Dostoevsky has masterfully captured the peculiar experience of time available to every human being

(remember Kolya is a kid) in the inevitable encounter with time, i.e. with death. The passage discloses an understanding of temporality and history that is not grounded so much on an impersonal conception of communal living and the mechanics of historical time, but springs primarily from the actual 'temporal' experience of being with 'specific' others. In the resurrection day (again I am not interested in the fact that in the 'patristic theology' the 'day' and the 'aeon' do not signify radically different states of affairs) what is mostly desired according to the passage is the redemption and elevation of one's personal history.

Alyosha does not say, "We will have a new life, or a new understanding of being" or anything similar to that, but simply "we *shall tell* one another...*everything that has happened*". It is difficult to comment on this beautiful passage without destroying its poetic resonance. Nevertheless we cannot put enough emphasis on this "everything" and on the fact that again, the basic characteristic of the 'afterlife', or indeed of any 'life' that human beings ('we') are seen as capable of is indisputably story telling (ιστορῶ), 'having' a history (ιστορία) in the most primordial sense.

The storyteller Alyosha has in mind, is perhaps not in danger of 'forgetting' a part of his own or his land's 'story' like the Athenians in Plato's *Timaeus*, and he would certainly not be oblivious to 'Being' like 'western humanity' in Heidegger's philosophy. The objection could be raised that nothing is new about the conceptualisation of the non-temporal in terms of experienced history and temporality in this 'standard' nineteenth century appropriation of Christian theology and modern philosophy. Indeed, there is something very familiar in Dostoevsky's passage, something furthermore

delivered in the same state of mind as that of Alyosha, viz. partly with 'laughter', partly with unrestrained 'emotion'. And yet, if this something is not unimportant this would be primarily because it is not conceptualised but narrated, by the 'half laughing, half overcome with emotion' Alyosha.

In one sense then the passage can be said to convey the feelings characterising the enigmatic relationship of human beings with time be this time 'historical', 'personal', 'social', 'natural', 'conventional', or otherwise and the aporetic state attained by human thought in its attempts to comprehend the mystery of time, the riddle of existence.

At the same time, the passage points to the puzzling –but persisting under many guises in the history of thought– relationship between time and eternity, which I attempted to make available in a thematic manner in the final part of this thesis. Certainly, the indication of the 'persistence of the origin' in Heidegger's understanding of historicity or the peculiar continuity pertinent to Gadamer's theorisation of the 'fusion of horizons' do not have the character of something 'present at hand', to use the Heideggerian jargon. If this reading is correct though, neither 'time' nor 'eternity' have this character, and this despite the fact that 'presence' is a constitutive part of the human experience of time and of our postulations about eternity.

Indeed, the *kairological* understanding of time that can be derived from Heidegger's writings despite the absence of any reference to the book of the *Ecclesiastes* on the philosopher's part supports such a reading but clearly culminates in an aporia regarding time. Time 'for', 'fulfilled time' does not necessarily entail a cancellation of an understanding of time as 'empty', while it poses the additional problem of the 'origin' and 'meaning' of the 'timely'.

This explains perhaps why Heidegger refrained from using the notion *Kairos* lest he would have to allow for elements of the Christian theological tradition to interfere, something that he would certainly perceive as a counterforce against his attempt to overcome metaphysics. This is certainly not to suggest that Heidegger's theorisation of *Xpóvos* as discussed in the last chapter does not tie him up with the Greek ontology and thus with metaphysics, but this is something I cannot pursue further here, *inter alia* due to severe limitations of space.

Are we entangled in a 'hermeneutic circle', are we faced with an aporia? In fact, is it legitimate to end up with an aporia? I believe that the answer is very much dependent on the definition and thus of the possible functioning of an aporetic state for thinking. For an aporia to be genuine, be it conceived in terms of an 'impasse' as with Heidegger or in terms of a 'lack of wealth' as in the Platonic tradition, it has to have a twofold functioning. First, it should not indicate a loss –most often a loss of certainty– without also signifying at the same time a 'gain'. This 'gain' can either have the character of a 'path' one has already travelled, or of some 'wealth' of experiences and knowledge that have become 'available' in the process of thinking. If this is the case, it should also indicate the possible paths for future reflection, it should posit the very urgency of following these paths. Indeed, we can see the aporetic state as inextricably bound with the philosophical 'life', or as being the very product of philosophy conceived as 'Eros'. It is doubtful whether the experience of philosophy as Eros is at all accessible to the 'modern' – disenchanted or to the 'post-modern' and allegedly re-enchanted dispositions and it is even more doubtful whether it has been accessible at the time of Plato's writings. In a sense this aporia can be

said to have something of the character of the 'return' as to the 'return of the philosopher' in the Platonic myth of the cave, although as Patocka (1996: 60) remarks this return does not mean a coming back "to things just as they were".

This 'return', is it not a mystery? Patocka (loc. Cit) rightly notes that it is not 'clear' why the philosopher has to 'return' to the cave. Against this observation I felt the urge to contribute to the peculiar dialogue that takes place between writer and reader by offering the 'apparent solution', which I also scribbled on the margins of the text (as no doubt all the inexperienced readers in philosophical matters do), lest my 'ingenious' answer be cast into oblivion: "The philosopher returns because of *Eros* my friend".

Little had I realized at the time of writing –perhaps even less do I realise it 'now'- that my 'ingenious' answer does not 'solve' anything and that it on the contrary 'says the same' as Patocka, by pointing to the mysterious mode of being of the 'return', indeed of human existence itself.

All it might suggest is that the issues of time and history, of Being and being-human, of *Eros* and *Polemos*, of the 'sacred' and the 'profane', of 'truth' and 'errancy', in short all these 'ultimate questions' are aporetic in character. It would be preposterous and indeed pompous to suggest that the present work has in any sense attained –or even approximated- the aporetic status I have tried to delineate above. Nevertheless, like any work that wishes to be delivered from mere absurdity, the present text should at least be able to account for some 'gains' together with the –many- 'losses'.

First and foremost, I hope that in spite of all other possible failings, this thesis did not fail to convince the reader about the urgency with which the question of 'meaning' and 'historicity' announces itself, and the intricate ways in

which it is bound with the conceptualisation of communal living and individual existence. This 'question' becomes even more important in light of both 'meaning' and 'historicity', or even of 'hermeneutics' as a method of the human sciences having attained a new –yet arguably uncritical- credibility, perhaps as a result of the 'retreat' of the dominant discourses of Marxism and Functionalism. Perhaps the human sciences, and even philosophy as an academic discipline unavoidably display what appears to be a 'fundamental human need' of 'belonging', sometimes even of 'following'. I sincerely hope I have managed to show the inadequacy of 'following a school' –to paraphrase Wittgenstein- by challenging the very assumption regarding the alleged incompatibility of phenomenological-hermeneutic elaborations and of the Marxist tradition.

It is altogether questionable whether 'ultimate questions' can be suppressed in favour of more 'tangible' –epistemic or political- ones, or whether a thinker's dissatisfaction with a state of affairs has an unequivocally 'socio-political' or 'existential' character. I have thus defended throughout this thesis the position that it is possible to be 'open' for the 'event of Being' without being necessarily 'uncritical', 'pre-Critical' or 'heteronomous'. Indeed, I have also indirectly suggested –and hopefully also managed to show- that the 'social' itself presents us with no less a mystery than the notions of 'Being', 'meaning' and 'historicity'. The discussion of the Marxist tradition has been instrumental for the development of this position, although it has to be said that more than any other thinker Castoriadis is undoubtedly the one who allowed me to grasp the 'resistance' offered by the 'social' in the attempt to conceptualise it. Castoriadis is also 'responsible' for the development of yet another 'insight' of this thesis,

namely the disentanglement of the notion of 'meaning' from either 'rationalist' or 'purposive' connotations.

It can be certainly suggested that the 'elusive' nature of meaning is already acknowledged in Weber's formulation of the task of *Verstehende Soziologie* in terms of a reconstruction of human action *as if* it were informed by 'rational' motives and meanings. To anyone familiar with the *Critique of Pure Reason* (see e.g. Kant, 1787/1929: 560) the Kantian legacy in this linking of 'purposive unity' and the functioning of the 'as if' is more than evident. This formulation by Weber is nevertheless of great importance since it points to a certain 'analogy' between unconscious patterns and conscious decisions informing human action, but it also 'narrows' the conception of the unconscious, which is ideally seen as amenable to 'reconstruction' in purely rational terms.

It is exactly this dissociation of the unconscious from the 'rational' and the defying of the belief in an absolute self-transparency of the 'social' – a basic premise of Marxist thought that would supposedly dissolve the 'subject-object' divide – that Castoriadis grasps in all its splendour.

I also attempted to point the reader towards non-privative conceptions of historicity, especially through the interpretation of Heidegger and Gadamer. This signifies a move away from the over-simplistic notion of 'self-enclosed' and 'equally valid' in their claims worldviews, postulated by certain currents of contemporary sociology and cultural studies. It also signifies a departure from the mode of cognition and 'truth' available in analytic philosophy and epistemology, which should not be interpreted as a sort of 'enmity' towards either the social sciences or certain philosophical traditions. Rather, it should

be seen –or at least this is the self-explication I am able to consciously offer- as a conviction about the need to radically revise the ‘unshakeable’ –or should I simply say fashionable- assumptions that hold sway both in the social and human ‘sciences’ and in philosophy, the ‘schools’ that are most favourably treated in the pages of this thesis included.

As the discussion on Gadamer in particular should have made clear, I sincerely hope to have established the need for a mutual reorientation of philosophy and the human sciences, largely based on the acknowledgment of their belonging *together*. I would not wish to shun the natural sciences from this procedure, and indeed a great challenge for thought would be to attempt to grasp and redefine the ‘common’ subject-matter of philosophy and the sciences, be they ‘natural’ or ‘social’.

It is not only that the ‘natural sciences’ allegedly are at this very moment –and have been for centuries- the history of humanity, but also that in the case of notions like those of ‘being’, ‘time’ and ‘truth’ they present us with dimensions inaccessible outside their conceptual and methodological framework. I admit though that I could not live up to this task.

I only wonder whether any science or any systematic philosophy could have better expressed our relationship with history past and present, with meaning and the relationship between individual and collective being than Cloran (1996: 5) in this short paragraph of his *History and Utopia* with the citation of which I would like to put a tentative ‘end’ to the ‘impossible’ task of concluding this thesis:

What is the use of being known, if we have not been so to that sage or that madman.
To a Marcus Aurelius or a Nero? We shall never have existed for so many of our idols.
Our name will have troubled none of the centuries before us; and those that come after-
What do they matter? What does the future, that half of time, matter to the man who is
Infatuated with eternity?

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